

A BROKEN JOURNEY

MARY GAUNT

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A BROKEN JOURNEY .



Books by Mary Gaunt

DAVE'S SWEETHEART
THE UNCOUNTED COST
EVERY MAN'S DESIRE
THE ENDS OF THE EARTH
THE MUMMY MOVES
THE SILENT ONES
ALONE IN WEST AFRICA
A WOMAN IN CHINA



WEDDING PARTY. FEN CHOU FU.

See page 68.

A BROKEN JOURNEY

WANDERINGS FROM THE HOANG-HO TO THE
ISLAND OF SAGHALIEN AND THE UPPER
REACHES OF THE AMUR RIVER

BY

MARY GAUNT

AUTHOR OF "ALONE IN WEST AFRICA"
"A WOMAN IN CHINA," ETC.



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A BROKEN JOURNAL

THE JOURNAL OF
THE LATE
JAMES M. HARRIS

TO MY

SISTER AND BROTHERS

IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE

DAYS BEFORE WE

WANDERED

THE JOURNAL OF
THE LATE
JAMES M. HARRIS

FOREWORD

I HAVE to thank my friend Mrs Lang for the drastic criticism which once more has materially helped me to write this book. Other people also have I to thank, but so great was the kindness I received everywhere I can only hope each one will see in this book some token of my sincere gratitude.

MARY GAUNT.

MARY HAVEN,
NEW ELTHAM, KENT.

FORWARD

I have to thank the many friends who have
helped me in the preparation of this book.
I have also to thank the many friends who
have helped me in the preparation of this book.
I have also to thank the many friends who
have helped me in the preparation of this book.

Very truly,
Your friend,
J. H. P.

J. H. P.
New York

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE LURE OF THE UNKNOWN	I
<p>"Come and find me"—Gloomy prognostications—Mr Purdom's views—"Keep your last cartridge for yourself"—Putting things in their proper perspective—An interpreter—A fool in any language—A Babylonish master of transport—The most important member of the party, James Buchanan—"Delay journey—White Wolf in Shensi"—A robber and his pursuers—By way of T'ai Yuan Fu</p>	
II. TRUCULENT T'AI YUAN FU	15
<p>The pekinese who did not appreciate the Chinaman—The woman who had made a fatal mistake—The gentlemen who ran the B.A.T.—The French line to T'ai Yuan Fu—Fleeing down the line on a trolley—Cutting off queues—T'ai Yuan Fu during the revolution</p>	
III. THE FIRST SIGN OF UNREST	31
<p>The joys of riding a pack-mule—The Flower Garden—A litter—The Jews of Shansi—A letter from Dr Edwards—White Wolf again—Not the act of a friend—The town in the shape of a turtle—The lonely missionary woman—The grace of the little children</p>	
IV. A CITY UNDER THE HILLS	49
<p>Two missionary systems—Admiration of the Chinaman for medical and scholastic missions—A Scandinavian faith mission—Friendly Fen Chou Fu—The building of the wall—The phoenixes that guard the town—A drawback to walls—A fair in a temple—The old-world wells—A Christian wedding—And a Christian wedding adapted</p>	
V. "MISERERE DOMINE!"	75
<p>"People will think you a suffragette!"—A useful citizen—Medical missions—"The Crying in the Wilderness"—Backsliders—Pioneers—The daily clinic—Ingrowing eyelashes—Chinese nurses—The torture of foot-binding—Breaking the bone—Cuban heels in flesh—The mincing walk—Marks of suffering—Lectures to women only—Dependent chattels—The woman whose husband had sold her—The son who had been insolent to his father</p>	

VI. BY MOUNTAIN AND RIVER 93

Complaint of the muleteers—Into the loess—Trusting a mule—Difficulties of a mule litter—"Buchanan declines"—A caravan route—The supercilious camel—The provisions of the people—A wonk dead and diseased—A major operation at a camel inn—The packed villages—The portent of the empty pack-saddles—The village of *yaos*—Cheap inns—Yung Ning Chou—A faith mission—The wistful Scandinavian missionary—Sui Te Chou shuts her gates

VII. CHINA'S SORROW 116

The summer rain—An inn-yard in the rain—Shelter in a lime-shed—An interested crowd—And a courteous one—The news of Pai Lang—A woman's show—The views of travellers—A mountain pass—A steep way—Worth it all—One of the world's great rivers—"Expending too much heart"—The farthest point west—Turning back

VIII. LAST DAYS IN CHINA 127

How to counteract failure—Dr Edwards' views—Spelled death—Another Chinese traveller with views diametrically opposed—"The little old woman on the *k'ang*"—The Roman Catholic Agricultural Mission—The wonderful temple at Tsui Su—Also the rats—Hwailu—The devoted missionaries—"The dear Lord will never let it rain"—The long hair of the women—The last meeting of the Travellers' Club at Pao Ting Fu—Buying curios—In a house-boat—A courtly little dog—Spheres of influence—The best thing for China

IX. KHARBIN AND VLADIVOSTOK 147

A feeling of adventure—The considerate soldier—Not the wisest way to arrive—"Got a little place of my own"—Not a decent Chinaman in the place—Choice between Chinese *hung hu tzes* and Russian brigands—The British consul at Kharbin—The hat of Johnny Walker—Provisions for a journey—The wooded hills of Manchuria—The pleasant rain—The best hotel—The British fleet at Vladivostok—The blood-thirsty sheep

X. ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREAT RIVERS 163

The empty country—Wanton extravagance—A lovely land—Inconvenience of Russian railway stations—The junction of the Amur and the Ussuri—Magnificent river steamers—Crowded—The *John Cockerill*—Dislike to fresh air—Cheap travelling—The stalwart women—The port of Nikolayevsk

CONTENTS

ix

CHAPTER

PAGE

XI. THE ENDS OF THE EARTH 179

A frontier town—Airless houses—Good Australian wine—"They steal—And kill"—Unsafe Siberian towns—Salmon 1½d. each—Russian and Chinese—Mate with the Glasgow accent—"Skeeters"—Emigrants—The hospitality of the Russian police—The chief town of Saghalien—The girls who had learned English in Japan—The oldest carriages in the world—"How lucky you are to get away from Saghalien!"

XII. FACING WEST 196

The aboriginal inhabitants—"Not wives. Oh no! . . . It is just the steamer"—Plucky colonel's wife—"There is War!"—My first demonstration against Germany—"A becoming hat and high boots!"—Hostile people—The Cossack officer—"They think—that Madame—is—a—spy!"—"C'est gai a la guerre!"—Luckless butterfly collector—The capital of the Amur Province

XIII. THE UPPER REACHES OF THE AMUR 209

A Siberian town—Difficulties of communication—The Boundary Commissioner—Sakalin—The Chinese Commissioner of Customs—Celebrating the coming into the war of Britain—The National Anthem—The dangers of wealth—A picnic with the Chinese Tao Tai—Gorgeous flowers—The loss of Buchanan—Saving face—Unfinished stories—Luxurious living—Rain on the Shilka—The World's War

XIV. MOBILISING IN EASTERN SIBERIA 224

The real Siberia—The exiles—Quagmires for roads—The difficulties of crossing a river—"Thieves, robbers and assassins!"—A night in a railway station—Russian washing arrangements—Running water—Toilet accessories—"Guard your purse, Madame"—Cheap travelling

XV. ON A RUSSIAN MILITARY TRAIN 240

A night in a second-class carriage—"Calm yourself, Madame, calm yourself. A man is coming with an instrument"—My Cossack friend—The long and sorrowful road—Democratic Russia—Abundant food—"An English name"—The lama's prophecy—Irkutsk—A Russian naval officer—"The train is full"—The occupants of the spare bunk—"An unfortunate accident"—The Siberian professor—The English "zee"—The pestilential train—The bath-houses at Cheliabinsk—Across Russia proper—Petrograd

XVI. THE WAYS OF THE FINNS	261
--------------------------------------	-----

Petrograd—What I ought to have thought about—What I did think about—The difficulties of a dog—What the privileges of a dog who pays 4s. a day for his keep?—The British Consulate—The Swedish Consulate—Oxford tones—Another Russian naval officer—The men of the gallant *Gloucester*—A porter's house in Finland—The Finn whose father had been a Scotsman—Commandeering a train—The Baltic at Raumo

XVII. CAPTURED BY GERMANS	280
-------------------------------------	-----

English sailor-men—Three cruisers and a torpedo boat—"Germans!"—Treachery—"What are you doing with all those fine young men on board?"—The taking of the Englishmen—The drugging of Buchanan—Swedish Customs—Landing at Gefle—A Swedish dog—Crossing to Norway—"Cannot be allowed to skip about the streets"—A clean bill of health—Bergen—"Their use is negligible!"—Home at last!

ILLUSTRATIONS

Wedding Party, Fen Chou Fu	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	TO FACE PAGE
Old Cannon on Wall, T'ai Yuan Fu ; Tsai Chih Fu beside it Mission Compound, Pao Ting Fu ; with Dr Lewis's little Son and Servant	} 8
Tree at East Gate, T'ai Yuan Fu	}
Author's Litter	} 9
Gateway of Everlasting Peace	}
Old House inhabited by the China Inland Mission	} 16
Tombs outside Ki Hsien	}
The First Signs of Unrest	} 17
Coroner's Court	}
The Walls of Fen Chou Fu, the North Gate and Northern Suburb	} 24
Inside the North Gate, Fen Chou Fu	}
Rusty Old-World Cannon and the Master of Transport	} 25
The Phoenixes on the Wall at Fen Chou Fu	}
Bronze Base of Phoenix, Fen Chou Fu	} 32
Tree full of Birds' Nests in Eastern Suburb, Fen Chou Fu Temple from the Wall, Fen Chou Fu	} 33
Heaps of Stones on the Walls, Fen Chou Fu	}
Rubbish Heaps of Centuries outside Fen Chou Fu	} 40
One of the tallest Pagodas in China	}
Nearer View of tall Pagoda at Fen Chou Fu	} 41
Missionary's Teacher and Priest	}
Ladies of Easy Virtue in the Taoist Temple	} 48
Author's Litter near Pagoda on the Wayside	}
Farmer ploughing, and small Pagoda, Fen Chou Fu	} 49
Wells in Fen Chou Fu	}
Bricklayers' Labourers	} 56
Literary Tower on Wall, Fen Chou Fu	}
Ruins of the Yamen, Fen Chou Fu	} 57

	TO FACE PAGE
Bringing Home a Coffin	} 64
Engaged to be Married	
A Patient at the Clinic	} 65
Author's Caravan passing Wayside Restaurant in the Mountains	
A Wayside Refreshment Booth in the Loess Country Inn-Yard	} 80
Wu Ch'eng, a Village of <i>Yaos</i>	
Outside a Camel Inn	} 81
Village Street	
Litter with Pack-Saddle across it in Inn-Yard	} 96
Village Street	
Pack-Saddles outside an Inn	} 97
The Cliffs after the Loess	
Loads of Straw Hats	} 104
Bridge outside Yung Ning Chou	
Author's Caravan crossing a River	} 105
East Gate of Yung Ning Chou	
Looking up the Main Street, Yung Ning Chou	} 112
Gate of a Town near to Liu Lin Chen	
Archway with Theatrical Notices, Liu Lin Chen	} 113
At the Top of the Pass	
Through the Mountains to the Yellow River	} 120
First Sight of Hoang-Ho	
The Hoang-Ho at Chun Pu	} 121
Avenue of Trees along the Wayside	
Strawboard drying	} 128
Temple at Tsui Su	
Twisted Trees in Temple Ground	} 129
Bronze Figure at Entrance to Temple	
Entrance to Temple, Tsui Su	} 144
Gateway to the Temple of the Hot Springs	
Mission Garden at Hwailu	} 145

A BROKEN JOURNEY

CHAPTER I

THE LURE OF THE UNKNOWN

EACH time I begin a book of travel I search for the reasons that sent me awandering. Foolishness, for I ought to know by this time the wander fever was born in my blood; it is in the blood of my sister and brothers. We were brought up in an inland town in Victoria, Australia, and the years have seen us roaming all over the world. I do not think any of us has been nearer the North Pole than Petropaulovski, or to the South Pole than Cape Horn—children of a sub-tropical clime, we do not like the cold—but in many countries in between have we wandered. The sailors by virtue of their profession have had the greater opportunities, but the other five have made a very good second best of it, and always there has been among us a very understanding sympathy with the desire that is planted in each and all to visit the remote corners of the earth.

Anybody can go on the beaten track. It only requires money to take a railway or steamer ticket, and though we by no means despise comfort—indeed, because we know something of the difficulties that beset the traveller beyond the bounds of civilisation, we appreciate it the more highly—still there is something else beyond comfort in life. Wherein lies the call of the Unknown? To have done something that no one else has done—or only accomplished with

difficulty ? Where lies the charm ? I cannot put it into words—only it is there, the “something calling—beyond the mountains,” the “Come and find me” of Kipling. That voice every one of the Gaunts hears, and we all sympathise when another one goes.

And that voice I heard loudly in China.

“Come and find me ! Come and find me !”

The livelong day I heard it, and again and again and yet again I tried to stifle it, for you who have read my *Woman in China* will know that travelling there leaves much to be desired. To say it is uncomfortable is to put it in the mildest terms. Everything that I particularly dislike in life have I met travelling in China ; everything that repels me ; and yet, having unwisely invested \$10 (about £1) in an atlas of China, the voice began to ring in my ears day and night.

I was living in an American Presbyterian mission station in the western suburb of the walled town of Pao Ting Fu, just beyond European influence, the influence of the Treaty Ports and the Legation quarter of Peking. I wanted to see something of the real China, to get material for a novel—not a novel concerning the Chinese ; for I have observed that no successful novel in English deals with anybody but the British or the Americans ; the other peoples come in as subordinates—and the local colour was best got on the spot. There was plenty in Pao Ting Fu, goodness knows. It had suffered severely in the Boxer trouble. In the northern suburb, just about a mile from where we lived, was a tomb, or monument rather, that had been raised to the missionaries massacred then. They have made a garden plot where those burning houses stood, they have planted trees and flowers, and set up memorial tablets in the Chinese style, and the mission has moved to the western suburb, just under the frowning walls of the town, and—is doubly

strong. A God-given fervour, say the missionaries, sends them forth. Who am I to judge? But I see that same desire to go forth in myself, that same disregard of danger, when it is not immediate—I know I should be horribly scared if it materialised—and I cannot claim for myself it is God-given, save perhaps that all our desires are God-given.

So there in the comfortable mission station I studied the local colour, corrected my last book of China, and instead of planning the novel, looked daily at the atlas of China, till there grew up in me a desire to cross Asia, not by train to the north as I had already done, as thousands of people used to do every year, but by the caravan route, across Shensi and Kansu and Sinkiang to Andijan in Asiatic Russia, the terminus of the Caspian Railway. Thousands and thousands of people go slowly along that way too, but the majority do not go all the way, and they do not belong to the class or nation whose comings and goings are recorded. In fact, you may count on the fingers of one hand the people who know anything of that road. The missionaries, particularly the womenkind, did not take very cheerful views about it.

“If I wanted to die,” said one woman, meeting me as I was going round the compound one day in the early spring of 1914, “I would choose some easier way.”

But the doctor there was keenly interested. He would have liked to have gone himself, but his duty kept him alongside his patients and his hospital in Pao Ting Fu, and though he pulled himself up every now and then, remembering I was only a woman and probably couldn't do it, he could not but take as great an interest in that map and ways and means as I did myself. Then there was Mr Long, a professor at the big Chinese college in the northern suburb—he was young and enthusiastic and as interested as Dr Lewis.

He too knew something about travel in unknown China, for he had been one of the band of white men who had made their way over the mountains of Shansi and Shensi in the depths of winter to go to the rescue of the missionaries in Sui Te Chou and all the little towns down to Hsi An Fu at the time of the Revolution. Yes, he knew something of the difficulties of Chinese travel, and he thought I could do it.

"The only danger would be robbers, and—well, you know, there mightn't be robbers."

But Peking—the Peking of the Legations—that, I knew, held different views. I wrote to an influential man who had been in China over ten years, who spoke the language well, and he was against it.

"I was very much interested" (wrote he) "to read of your intention to do that trek across country. You ask my opinion about it, but I can only give you the same advice that *Punch* gave many years ago, and that is, DON'T. You must realise that the travelling will be absolutely awful and the cost is very great indeed. You have not yet forgotten your trip to Jehol, I hope, and the roughness of the road. The trip you contemplate will make the little journey to Jehol look like a Sunday morning walk in Hyde Park, particularly as regards travelling comfort, to say nothing about the danger of the journey as regards hostile tribes on the southern and western borders of Tibet. You will be passing near the Lolo country, and I can assure you that the Lolos are *not* a set of gentlemen within the meaning of the Act. They are distinctly hostile to foreigners, and many murders have taken place in their country that have not been published because of the inability of the Chinese troops to stand up against these people. What the peoples are like farther north I do not know, but I understand the

Tibetans are not particularly trustworthy, and it will follow that the people living on their borders will inherit a good many of their vices and few of their virtues.

“If you have really made up your mind to go, however, just let me know, and I will endeavour to hunt up all the information that it is possible to collect as to the best route to take, etc., though I repeat I would not advise the journey, and the Geographical Society can go to the deuce.”

This not because he despised the Geographical Society by any means, but because I had advanced as one reason for going across Asia the desire to win my spurs so and be an acceptable member.

“My dear,” wrote a woman, “think of that poor young Brooke. The Tibetans cut his throat with a sharp stone, which is a pleasant little way they have.”

Now the man’s opinion was worth having, but the woman’s is a specimen of the loose way people are apt to reason—I do it myself—when they deal with the unknown. The “poor young Brooke” never went near Tibet, and was murdered about a thousand miles distant from the route I intended to take. It was something as if a traveller bound to the Hebrides was warned against dangers to be met upon the Rhone.

One man who had travelled extensively in Mongolia was strongly against the journey, but declared that “Purdom knew a great deal more about travelling in China” than he did, and if “Purdom” said I might go—well then, I might. Mr Purdom and Mr Reginald Farrer were going west to the borders of Tibet botanising, and one night I dined with them, and Mr Purdom was optimistic and declared if I was prepared for discomfort and perhaps hardship he thought I might go.

So it was decided, and thereupon those who knew took me in hand and gave me all advice about travelling in China, how to minimise discomfort, what to take and what to leave behind. One thing they were all agreed upon. The Chinese, as a rule, are the most peaceable people upon earth, the only thing I had to fear was a chance band of robbers, and if I fell into their hands—well, it would probably be finish.

“The Chinese are fiendishly cruel,” said my friend of Mongolian travel; “keep your last cartridge for yourself.”

I intimated that a pistol was quite beyond me, that that way of going out did not appeal to me, and anyhow I’d be sure to bungle it.

“Then have something made up at the chemist’s and keep it always on your person. You do not know how desperately you may need it.”

I may say here that these remarks made no impression upon me whatever. I suppose in most of us the feeling is strong that nothing bad could possibly happen. It happens to other people, we know, but to us—impossible! I have often wondered how near I could get to danger without feeling that it really threatened—pretty close, I suspect. It is probably a matter of experience. I cannot cross a London road with equanimity—but then twice have I been knocked down and rather badly hurt—but I gaily essayed to cross Asia by way of China, and would quite certainly as gaily try again did I get the chance. Only next time I propose to take a good cook.

To some, of course, the unknown is always full of danger.

The folks who walked about Peking without a qualm warned me I would die of indigestion, I would be unable to drink the water, the filth would be unspeakable, hydrophobia raged, and “when you are bitten, promptly cut deep into the place and insert a chloride of mercury tabloid.”

That last warning made me laugh. It reminded me of the time when as a little girl, living in a country where deadly snakes swarmed—my eldest brother killed sixty in a week, I remember, in our garden—I used to think it would be extremely dangerous to go to Europe because there were there mad dogs, things we never had in Australia! I think it was the reference to hydrophobia and the chloride of mercury tabloid helped me to put things in their proper prospective and made me realise that I was setting out on a difficult journey with a possible danger of robbers; but a possible danger is the thing we risk every day we travel in a railway train or on an electric tramcar. I am always ready for possible risks, it is when they become probable I bar them, so I set about my preparations with a quiet mind.

A servant. I decided I must have a tall servant and strong, because so often in China I found I had to be lifted, and I had suffered from having too small a man on my former journeys. The missionaries provided me with a new convert of theirs, a tall strapping Northern Chinaman, who was a mason by trade. Tsai Chih Fu, we called him—that is to say, he came of the Tsai family; and the Chih Fu—I'm by no means sure that I spell it right—meant a "master workman." He belonged to a large firm of masons, but as he had never made a dollar a day at his trade, my offer of that sum put him at my service, ready to go out into the unknown. He was a fine-looking man, dignified and courteous, and I had and have the greatest respect for him. He could not read or write, of course. Now a man who cannot read or write here in the West we look upon with contempt, but it would be impossible to look upon Tsai Chih Fu with contempt. He was a responsible person, a man who would count in any company. He belonged to

another era and another civilisation, but he was a man of weight. A master of transport in Babylon probably closely resembled my servant Tsai Chih Fu.

My interpreter, Wang Hsien—that is, Mr Wang—was of quite a different order. He was little and slight, with long artistic hands, of the incapable artistic order, and he was a fool in any language; but good interpreters are exceedingly difficult to get. He used to come and see me every day for a fortnight before we started, and I must say my heart sank when the simplest remark, probably a greeting, or a statement as to the weather, was met with a "Repeat, please." I found this was the invariable formula and it was not conducive to brisk conversation. On my way through the country things were apt to vanish before I had made Mr Wang understand that I was asking, and was really in search of, information. He had his black hair cut short in the progressive foreign fashion (it looked as if he had had a basin put on his head—a good large one—and the hair snipped off round), and he wore a long blue cotton gown buttoned to his feet. Always he spoke with a silly giggle. Could I have chosen, which I could not, he would have been about the very last man I should have taken on a strenuous journey as guide, philosopher and friend.

And there was another member of the party, a most important member, without whom I should not have dreamt of stirring—my little black and white k'ang dog, James Buchanan, who loved me as no one in the world has ever loved me, thought everything I did was perfect, and declared he was willing to go with me to the ends of the earth.

So I began my preparations. One thing only was clear, everyone was agreed upon it, all my goods must be packed in canvas bags, because it is impossible to travel by mule,



OLD CANNON ON WALL T'AI YUAN FU. TSAI CHIH FU BESIDE IT.



MISSION COMPOUND PAO TING FU WITH DR. LEWIS'S
LITTLE SON AND SERVANT.

See page 2.



TREE AT EAST GATE T'AI YUAN FU.



AUTHOR'S LITTER.

See page 34.

or cart, or litter with one's clothes in ordinary boxes. And I had, through the kindness of Messrs Forbes & Company, to make arrangements with Chinese bankers, who have probably been making the same arrangements since before the dawn of history, to get money along the proposed route. These things I managed satisfactorily ; it was over the stores that, as usual, I made mistakes. The fact of the matter is that the experience gained in one country is not always useful for the next. When first I travelled in Africa I took many " chop " boxes that were weighty and expensive of transport, and contained much tinned meat that in a warm, moist climate I did not want. I found I could live quite happily on biscuits and fruit and eggs, with such relishes as anchovy paste or a few Bologna sausages for a change. My expensive tinned foods I bestowed upon my servants and carriers, greatly to my own regret. I went travelling in China, in Northern Chihli and Inner Mongolia, I dwelt apart from all foreigners in a temple in the western hills, and I found with a good cook I lived very comfortably off the country, with just the addition of a few biscuits, tea, condensed milk, coffee and raisins, therefore I persuaded myself I could go west with few stores and do exactly the same. Thus I added considerably to my own discomfort. The excellent master of transport was a bad cook, and a simple diet of hard-boiled eggs, puffed rice and tea, with raisins for dessert, however good in itself, is apt to pall when it is served up three times a day for weeks with unfailing regularity.

However, I didn't know that at the time.

And at last all was ready. I had written to all the mission stations as far west as Tihwa, in Sinkiang, announcing my coming. I had provided myself with a folding table and chair—they both, I found, were given to fold at inconvenient

moments—some enamel plates, a couple of glasses, a knife and fork, rudimentary kitchen utensils, bedding, cushions, rugs, etc., and all was ready. I was to start the next week, ten days after Mr Purdom and Mr Farrer had set out, for Honan, when there came a telegram from Hsi An Fu :

“Delay journey” (it read). “White wolf in Shensi. SHORROCKS.”

Was there ever such country? News that a robber was holding up the road could be sent by telegram !

China rather specialises in robbers, but White Wolf was considerably worse than the average gentleman of the road. He defied the Government in 1914, but the last time we of the mission station had heard of him he was making things pleasant for the peaceful inhabitants of Anhwei, to the east, and the troops were said to have him “well in hand.” But in China you never know exactly where you are, and now he was in Shensi !

I read that telegram in the pleasant March sunshine. I looked up at the boughs of the “water chestnuts,” where the buds were beginning to swell, and I wondered what on earth I should do. The roads now were as good as they were ever likely to be, hard after the long winter and not yet broken up by the summer rains. We discussed the matter from all points that day at the midday dinner. The missionaries had a splendid cook, a Chinese who had had his kitchen education finished in a French family, and with a few good American recipes thrown in the combination makes a craftsman fit for the Savoy, and all for ten Mexican dollars a month ! Never again do I expect to meet such salads, sweet and savoury ! And here was I doing my best to leave the flesh-pots of Egypt. It seemed foolish.

I contented my soul with what patience I might for a week,

and then I telegraphed to Honan Fu, at which place I expected to be well away from the railway. Honan Fu answered promptly:

“The case is hopeless. Hsi An Fu threatened. Advise you go by T'ai Yuan Fu.”

Now the road from Honan Fu to Hsi An Fu is always dangerous. It is through the loess, sunken many feet below the level of the surrounding country, and at the best of times is infested with stray robbers who, from the cliffs above, roll down missiles on the carts beneath, kill the mules and hold the travellers at their mercy. The carters go in large bodies and are always careful to find themselves safe in the inn-yards before the dusk has fallen.

These were the everyday dangers of the way such as men have faced for thousands of years; if you add to them an organised robber band and a large body of soldiers in pursuit, clearly that road is no place for a solitary foreign woman, with only a couple of attendants, a little dog, and for all arms a small pistol and exactly thirteen cartridges—all I could get, for it is difficult to buy ammunition in China. Then to clinch matters came another telegram from Hsi An Fu, in cipher this time:

“Do not come” (it said). “The country is very much disturbed.”

From Anhwei to Shensi the brigands had operated. They had burned and looted and outraged by order of Pai Lang (White Wolf), leaving behind them ruined homes and desolated hearths, and when the soldiers came after them, so said Rumour of the many tongues, White Wolf, who was rich by then, left money on the roads and so bribed the avenging army to come over to him.

But to the ordinary peaceful inhabitant—and curiously enough the ordinary Chinese is extremely peaceful—it is not a matter of much moment whether it be Pai Lang or the soldier who is hunting him who falls upon the country. The inhabitants are sure to suffer. Both bandit and soldier must have food, so both loot and outrage impartially, for the unpaid soldiery—I hope I shall not be sued for libel, but most of the soldiery when I was in China appeared to be unpaid—loot just as readily as do the professional bandits. A robber band alone is a heavy load for a community to carry, and a robber band pursued by soldiers more than doubles the burden.

Still the soldiers held Tungkwan, the gate into Shensi, the mountains on either side blocked the way, and Hsi An Fu breathed for a moment till it was discovered that Pai Lang in strategy was equal to anyone who had been sent against him. He had taken the old and difficult route through the mountains and had come out west of the narrow pass of Tungkwan and, when I became interested in him, was within a day's march of Hsi An Fu, the town that is the capital of the province of Shensi and was the capital of China many hundreds of years ago. It is a walled city, but the people feared and so did the members of the English Baptist Mission sheltering behind those walls. And, naturally, they feared, for the Society of the Elder Brethren had joined Pai Lang, and the Society of Elder Brethren always has been and is markedly anti-foreign. This was the situation, growing daily a little worse, and we foreigners looked on; and the Government organs in Peking told one day how a certain Tao Tai had been punished and degraded because he had been slack in putting down White Wolf and possibly the next day declared the power of White Wolf was broken and he was in full retreat. I don't know how many times

I read the power of White Wolf had been broken and yet in the end I was regretfully obliged to acknowledge that he was stronger than ever. Certainly Pai Lang turned my face north sooner than I intended, for the idea of being a target for rocks and stones and billets of wood at the bottom of a deep ditch from which there could be no escape did not commend itself to me. True, in loess country, as I afterwards found, there are no stones, no rocks and no wood. I can't speak for the road through Tungkwan, for I didn't dare it. But, even if there were no stones, loose earth—and there is an unlimited quantity of that commodity in Northern China—flung down from a height would be exceedingly unpleasant.

Of course it all might have been rumour—it wasn't, I found out afterwards; but unfortunately the only way to find out at the time was by going to see for myself, and if it had been true—well, in all probability I shouldn't have come back. That missionary evidently realised how keen I was when he suggested that I should go by T'ai Yuan Fu, the capital of Shansi, and I determined to take his advice. There was a way, a little-known way, across the mountains, across Shansi, by Sui Te Chou in Shensi, and thence into Kansu, which would eventually land me in Lan Chou Fu if I cared to risk it.

This time I asked Mr Long's advice. He and the little band of nine rescuers who had ridden hot haste to the aid of the Shensi missionaries during the revolution had taken this road, and they had gone in the depths of winter when the country was frozen hard and the thermometer was more often below zero, very far below zero, than not. If they had accomplished it when pressed for time in the great cold, I thought in all probability I might manage it now at the best time of the year and at my leisure. Mr Long, who

would have liked to have gone himself, thought so too, and eventually I set off.

The missionaries were goodness itself to me. Dr Mackay, in charge of the Women's Hospital, set me up with all sorts of simple drugs that I might require and that I could manage, and one day in the springtime, when the buds on the trees in the compound were just about to burst, and full of the promise of the life that was coming, I, with most of the missionaries to wish me "Godspeed," and with James Buchanan under my arm, my giggling interpreter and my master of transport following with my gear, took train to T'ai Yuan Fu, a walled city that is set in the heart of a fertile plateau surrounded by mountains.

The great adventure had begun.

CHAPTER II

TRUCULENT T'AI YUAN FU

BUT you mayn't go to T'ai Yuan Fu in one day. The southern train puts you down at Shih Chia Chuang—the village of the Stone Family—and there you must stay till 7.40 A.M. next morning, when the French railway built through the mountains that divide Shansi from Shensi takes you on to its terminus at T'ai Yuan Fu. There is a little Chinese inn at Shih Chia Chuang that by this time has become accustomed to catering for the foreigner, but those who are wise beg the hospitality of the British American Tobacco Company.

I craved that hospitality, and two kindly young men came to the station through a dust-storm to meet me and took me off to their house that, whether it was intended to or not, with great cool stone balconies, looked like a fort. But they lived on perfectly friendly terms with people. Why not? To a great number of the missionaries the B.A.T. is *anathema maranatha*, though many of the members rival in pluck and endurance the missionaries themselves. And why is it a crime for a man or a woman to smoke? Many of the new teachers make it so and thus lay an added burden on shoulders already heavily weighted. Personally I should encourage smoking, because it is the one thing people who are far apart as the Poles might have in common.

And goodness knows they have so few things. Even with the animals the "East is East and West is West" feeling is most marked. Here at the B.A.T. they had a small pekinese

as a pet. She made a friend of James Buchanan in a high and haughty manner, but she declined to accompany him outside the premises. Once she had been stolen and had spent over three months in a Chinese house. Then one day her master saw her and, making good his claim, took her home with him. Since that time nothing would induce her to go beyond the front door. She said in effect that she got all the exercise she needed in the courtyard, and if it did spoil her figure, she preferred a little weight to risking the tender mercies of a Chinese household, and I'm sure she told Buchanan, who, having the sacred V-shaped mark on his forehead, was reckoned very beautiful and was much admired by the Chinese, that he had better take care and not fall into alien hands. Buchanan as a puppy of two months old had been bought in the streets of Peking, and when we started on our journey must have been nearly ten months old, but he had entirely forgotten his origin and regarded all Chinese with suspicion. He tolerated the master of transport as a follower of whom we had need.

"Small dog," Mr Wang called him, and looked upon him doubtfully, but really not as doubtfully as Buchanan looked at him. He was a peaceful, friendly little dog, but I always thought he did not bite Mr Wang simply because he despised him so.

Those two young men were more than good to me. They gave me refreshment, plenty of hot water to wash away the ravages of the dust-storm, and good company, and as we sat and talked—of White Wolf, of course—there came to us the tragedy of a life, a woman who had not the instincts of Buchanan.

Foreign women are scarce at Shih Chia Chuang; one a month is something to remark upon, one a week is a crowd, so that when, as we sat in the big sitting-room talking, the door



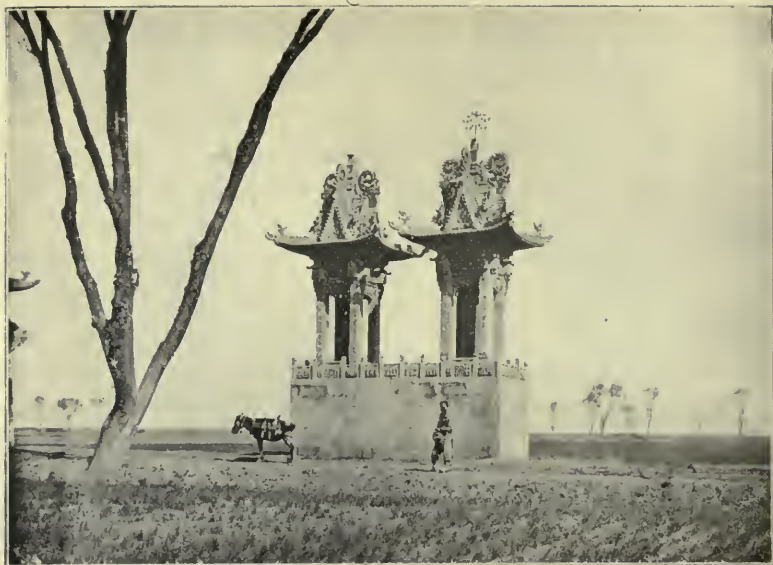
GATEWAY OF EVERLASTING PEACE.

See page 42.



OLD HOUSE INHABITED BY THE CHINA INLAND MISSION.

See page 39.



TOMBS OUTSIDE KI HSIEN.

See page 42.



THE FIRST SIGN OF UNREST.

See page 42.

opened and a foreign woman stood there, everyone rose to his feet in astonishment. Mr Long, who had been up the line, stood beside her, and behind her was a Chinaman with a half-caste baby in his arms. She was young and tall and rather pretty.

"I bring you a lady in distress," said Mr Long rather hastily, explaining matters. "I met Mrs Chang on the train. She has miscalculated her resources and has not left herself enough money to get to Peking."

The woman began to explain; but it is an awkward thing to explain to strangers that you have no money and are without any credentials. I hesitated. Eventually I hope I should have helped her, but my charity and kindness were by no means as ready and spontaneous as those of my gallant young host. He never hesitated a moment. You would have thought that women and babies without any money were his everyday business.

"Why, sure," said he in his pleasant American voice, "if I can be of any assistance. But you can't go to-day, Mrs Chang; of course you will stay with us—oh yes, yes; indeed we should be very much hurt if you didn't; and you will let me lend you some money."

And so she was established among us, this woman who had committed the unpardonable sin of the East, the sin against her race, the sin for which there is no atoning. It is extraordinary after all these years, after all that has been said and written, that Englishwomen, women of good class and standing, will so outrage all the laws of decency and good taste. This woman talked. She did not like the Chinese, she would not associate with them; her husband, of course, was different. He was good to her; but it was hard to get work in these troubled times, harder still to get paid for it, and he had gone away in search of it, so she was

going for a holiday to Peking and—here she turned to the young men and talked about the society and the dances and the amusement she expected to have among the foreigners in the capital, she who for so long had been cut off from such joys in the heart of China among an alien people.

We listened. What could we say?

“People in England don’t really understand,” said she, “what being in exile means. They don’t understand the craving to go home and speak to one’s own people; but being in Peking will be something like being in England.”

We other five never even looked at each other, because we knew, and we could hardly believe, that she had not yet realised that in marrying a Chinese, even one who had been brought up in England, she had exiled herself effectually. The Chinese look down upon her, they will have none of her, and among the foreigners she is outcast. These young men who had come to her rescue with such right good will—“I could not see a foreign woman in distress among Chinese”—will pass her in the street with a bow, will not see her if they can help themselves, will certainly object that anyone they care about should see them talking to her, and their attitude but reflects that of the majority of the foreigners in China. Her little child may not go to the same school as the foreign children, even as it may not go to the same school as the Chinese. She has committed the one error that outclasses her, and she is going to pay for it in bitterness all the days of her life. And everyone in that room, while we pitied her, held, and held strongly, that the attitude of the community, foreign and Chinese, was one to be upheld.

“East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet,” and yet here and there one still comes across a foolish woman who wrecks her life because she never seems to have heard of this dictum. She talked and talked, and told us

how good was her husband to her, and we listeners said afterwards she "doth protest too much," she was convincing herself, not us, and that, of course, seeing he was a Chinaman, he was disappointed that the baby was a girl, and that his going off alone was the beginning of the end, and we were thankful that she was "the only girl her mother had got," and so she could go back to her when the inevitable happened.

The pity of it! When will the stay-at-home English learn that the very worst thing one of their women can do with her life is to wed an Oriental? But when I think of that misguided woman in that remote Chinese village I shall always think too of those gallant young gentlemen, perfect in courteous kindness, who ran the B.A.T. in Shih Chia Chuang.

The next day Buchanan and I and our following boarded the luxurious little mountain railway and went to T'ai Yuan Fu.

This railway, to me, who know nothing of such things, is a very marvel of engineering skill. There are great rugged mountains, steep and rocky, and the train winds its way through them, clinging along the sides of precipices, running through dark tunnels and cuttings that tower high overhead and going round such curves that the engine and the guard's van of a long train are going in exactly opposite directions. A wonderful railway, and doubly was I interested in it because before ever I came to China I had heard about it.

When there are disturbances in China it is always well for the foreign element to flee while there is yet time, for the sanctity of human life is not yet thoroughly grasped there, and there is always the chance that the foreigner may be killed first and his harmlessness, or even his value, discovered

later. So in the revolution in the winter of 1910-1911, though all train traffic had stopped, the missionaries from T'ai Yuan Fu and those from the country beyond fled down this railway. A friend of mine, an artist, happened to be staying at a mission station in the mountains and made one of the party. It was the depth of a Shansi winter, a Continental winter, with the thermometer generally below -15° at the warmest part of the day, and the little band of fugitives came fleeing down this line on trollies worked by the men of the party. They stayed the nights at the deserted railway stations, whence all the officials had fled, and the country people in their faded blue cotton wadded coats came and looked at them and, pointing their fingers at them exactly as I have seen the folks in the streets of London do at a Chinaman or an Arab in an outlandish dress, remarked that these people were going to their death.

"Death! Death!" sounded on all sides. They, the country people, were peaceful souls; they would not have killed them themselves; they merely looked upon them as an interesting exhibit because they were foreign and they were going to die. That the audience were wrong the people on show were not quite as sure as they would have liked to be, and a single-line railway through mountainous country is by no means easy to negotiate on a trolley. They came to places where the line was carried upon trestles; they could see a river winding its way at the bottom of a rocky ravine far below them, and the question would be how to get across. It required more nerve than most of them had to walk across the skeleton bridge. The procedure seems to have been to give each trolley a good hard push, to spring upon it and to trust to Providence to get safely across to the firm earth upon the other side. The tunnels too, and the

sharp curves, were hair-raising, for they knew nothing of what was happening at the other end of the line, and for all they could say they might have come full butt upon a train rushing up in the other direction.

Eventually they did get through, but with considerable hardship, and I should hesitate to say how many days that little company went without taking off their clothes. I thought of them whenever our train went into a tunnel, and I thought too of the gay girl who told me the story and who had dwelt not upon the discomfort and danger, but upon the excitement and exhilaration that comes with danger.

"I lived," said she, "I lived," and my heart went out to her. It is that spirit in this "nation of shopkeepers" that is helping us to beat the Germans.

The scenery through which we went is beautiful—it would be beautiful in any land—and this in China, where I expected not so much beauty as industry. There were evidences of industry in plenty on every side. These people were brethren of the bandits who turned me north and they are surely the most industrious in the world. Wherever among these stony hills there was a patch of ground fit for cultivation, though it was tiny as a pocket handkerchief, it was cultivated. Everywhere I saw people at work in the fields, digging, weeding, ploughing with a dry cow or a dry cow and a donkey hitched to the primitive plough, or guiding trains of donkeys or mules carrying merchandise along the steep and narrow paths, and more than once I saw strings of camels, old-world camels that took me back before the days of written history. They kept to the valleys and evidently made their way along the river beds.

Through mountain sidings and tunnels we came at length to the curious loess country, where the friable land is cut

into huge terraces that make the high hills look like pyramids carved in great clay-coloured steps, and now in April the green crops were already springing ; another month and they would be banks of waving green. The people are poor, their faces were browned by the sun and the wind, their garments were scanty and ragged, and the original blue was faded till the men and the clothes were all the same monotonous clay colour of the surrounding country. The women I saw here were few, and only afterwards I found the reason. The miserably poor peasant of Shansi binds the feet of his women so effectually that to the majority movement is a physical impossibility.

We climbed up and up through the mountains into the loess country, and at last we were on the plateau, about four thousand feet above the sea-level, whereon is T'ai Yuan Fu, the capital of the province. There are other towns here too, little walled cities, and the train drew up at the stations outside the grey brick walls, the most ancient and the most modern, Babylon and Crewe meeting. Oh, I understand the need of those walled cities now I have heard so much about Pai Lang. There is a certain degree of safety behind those grey walls, so long as the robber bands are small and the great iron-bound gates can keep them out, but dire is the fate of the city into which the enemy has penetrated, has fastened the gates and holds the people in a trap behind their own walls.

But these people were at peace ; they were thinking of no robbers. Pai Lang was about five hundred miles away and the station platforms were crowded with would-be travellers with their belongings in bundles, and over the fence that shut off the platform hung a vociferating crowd waving white banners on which were inscribed in black characters

the signs of the various inns, while each banner-bearer at the top of his voice advocated the charms of his own employer's establishment. The queue was forbidden for the moment, but many of these ragged touts and many of the other peasants still wore their heads shaven in front, for the average Chinaman, especially he of the poorer classes, is loath to give up the fashions of his forefathers.

Every railway platform was pandemonium, for every person on that platform yelled and shrieked at the top of his voice. On the main line every station was guarded by untidy, unkempt-looking soldiers armed with rifles, but there on this little mountain railway the only guards were policemen, equally unkempt, clad in very dusty black and white and armed with stout-looking bludgeons. They stood along the line at regular intervals, good-natured-looking men, and I wondered whether they would really be any good in an emergency, or whether they would not take the line of least resistance and join the attacking force.

All across the cultivated plain we went, where not an inch of ground is wasted, and at half-past five in the evening we arrived at T'ai Yuan Fu—arrived, that is, at the station outside the little South Gate.

T'ai Yuan Fu is a great walled city eight miles round, with five gates in the walls, gates that contrast strangely with the modern-looking macadamised road which goes up from the station. I don't know why I should feel that way, for they certainly had paved roads even in the days before history. Outside the walls are neat, perhaps forty feet high and of grey brick, and inside you see how these city walls are made, for they are the unfinished clay banks that have been faced in front, and when I was there in the springtime the grass upon them was showing everywhere and the shrubs were

bursting into leaf. But those banks gave me a curious feeling of being behind the scenes.

I was met at the station by some of the ladies of the English Baptist Mission who had come to welcome me and to offer me, a total stranger to them, kindly hospitality, and we walked through the gate to the mission inside the walls. It was only a short walk, short and dusty, but it was thronged. All the roadway was crowded with rickshaws and carts waiting in a long line their turn to go underneath the gateway over which frowned a typical many-roofed Chinese watch tower, and as cart or rickshaw came up the men along with it were stopped by the dusty soldiery in black and grey and interrogated as to their business.

When I got out on to the platform I had looked up at the ancient walls clear-cut against the bright blue sky, and the women meeting me looked askance at Tsai Chih Fu, who, a lordly presence, stood behind me, with James Buchanan in his arms, a little black satin cap on his head and his pigtail hanging down his back.

"There is some little commotion in the town," said Miss Franklin. "They are cutting off queues."

The master of transport smiled tolerantly when they told him, and, taking off his cap, he wound his tightly round his head.

"I know," he said in the attitude of a man of the world, "some people do not wear them now. But I have always worn one, and I like it," and his manner said he would like to see the person who would dare dictate to him in what manner he should wear his hair. He could certainly have put up a good fight.

It was not needed. He passed through unchallenged; he was a quietly dressed man who did not court notice and his strapping inches were in his favour. He might well be



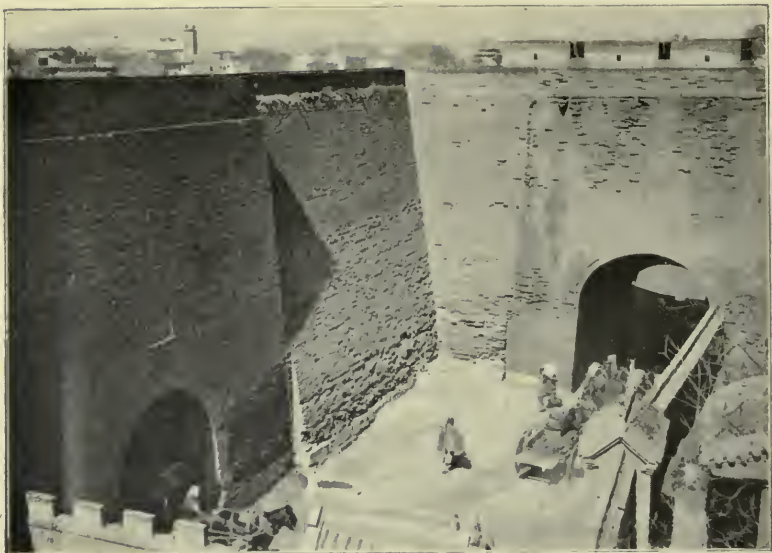
CORONER'S COURT.

See page 44.



THE WALLS OF FEN CHOU FU.
THE NORTH GATE AND NORTHERN SUBURB.

See page 52.



INSIDE THE NORTH GATE FEN CHOU FU.

See page 53.



RUSTY OLD WORLD CANNON AND THE MASTER OF TRANSPORT.

See page 53.

passed over when there were so many slighter men more easily tackled. One man riding along in a rickshaw I saw put up a splendid fight. At last he was hauled out of his carriage and his little round cap tossed off his head, and then it was patent his queue could not be cut, for he was bald as a billiard ball! The Chinese do understand a joke, even a mob. They yelled and howled with laughter, and we heard it echoing and re-echoing as we passed under the frowning archway, tramping across many a dusty coil of coarse black hair roughly shorn from the heads of the luckless adherents to the old fashion. The missionaries said that Tsai Chih Fu must be the only man in T'ai Yuan Fu with a pigtail and that it would be very useful to us as we went farther west, where they had not yet realised the revolution. They doubted if he would be able to keep it on so strict was the rule, but he did—a tribute, I take it, to the force of my “master of transport.”

The ladies lived in a Chinese house close under the walls. There is a great charm about these houses built round courtyards in the Chinese style; there is always plenty of air and sunshine, though, as most of the rooms open into the courtyard only, I admit in rough weather they must sometimes be awkward, and when—as is always the case in Shansi in winter-time—the courtyard is covered with ice and snow, and the thermometer is far below zero for weeks at a time, it is impossible to go from bedroom to sitting-room without being well wrapped up. And yet, because China is not a damp country, it could never be as awkward as it would be in England, and for weeks at a time it is a charming arrangement. Staying there in April, I found it delightful. Buchanan and I had a room under a great tree just showing the first faint tinge of green, and I shall always be grateful for the kindly hospitality those young ladies gave me.

From there we went out and saw T'ai Yuan Fu, and another kindly missionary engaged muleteers for me and made all arrangements for my journey across Shansi and Shensi and Kansu to Lan Chou Fu.

But T'ai Yuan Fu is not a nice town to stay in.

"The town," said the missionaries, "is progressive and anti-foreign." It is. You feel somehow the difference in the attitude of the people the moment you set foot inside the walls. It seems to me that if trouble really came it would be an easy matter to seize the railway and cut off the foreign missionaries from all help, for it is at least a fortnight away in the mountains.

They suffered cruelly at the Boxer time: forty men, women and little helpless children were butchered in cold blood in the yamen, and the archway leading to the hospital where Miss Coombs the schoolmistress was deliberately burned to death while trying to guard and shelter her helpless pupils still stands. In the yamen, with a refinement of torture, they cut to pieces the little children first, and then the women, the nuns of the Catholic Church the fierce soldiery dishonoured, and finally they slew all the men. Against the walls in the street stand two miserable stones that the Government were forced to put up to the memory of the foreigners thus ruthlessly done to death, but a deeper memorial is engraven on the hearts of the people. Some few years later the tree underneath which they were slain was blasted by lightning and half destroyed, and on that very spot, during the recent revolution, the Tao Tai of the province was killed.

"A judgment!" said the superstitious people. "A judgment!" say even the educated.

And during the late revolution the white people shared with the inhabitants a terribly anxious time. Shut up in

the hospital with a raging mob outside, they waited for the place to be set on fire. The newest shops in the principal streets were being looted, the Manchu city—a little walled city within the great city—was destroyed, and though they opened the gates and told the Manchus they might escape, the mob hunted down the men as they fled and slew them, though, more merciful than Hsi An Fu, they let the women and children escape. Men's blood was up, the lust of killing was upon them, and the men and women behind the hospital walls trembled.

"We made up our minds," said a young missionary lady to me, "that if they fired the place we would rush out and mingle in the mob waiting to kill us. They looked awful. I can't tell you how they looked, but it would have been better than being burned like rats in a trap."

A Chinese crowd, to my Western eyes, unkempt, unwashed, always looks awful; what it must be like when they are out to kill I cannot imagine.

And then she went on: "Do you know, I was not really as much afraid as I should have thought I would have been. There was too much to think about." Oh, merciful God! I pray that always in such moments there may be "too much to think about."

The mob looted the city. They ruined the university. They destroyed the Manchus. But they spared the foreigners; and still there flourishes in the town a mission of the English Baptists and another of the Catholics, but when I was there the town had not yet settled down. There was unrest, and the missionaries kept their eyes anxiously on the south, on the movements of Pai Lang. We thought about him at Pao Ting Fu, but here the danger was just a little nearer, help just a little farther away. Besides, the people were different. They were not quite so subservient, not

quite so friendly to the foreigner, it would take less to light the tinder.

For myself, I was glad of the instinct that had impelled me to engage as servant a man of inches. I dared never walk in the streets alone as I had been accustomed to in Pao Ting Fu. It marks in my mind the jumping-off place. Here I left altogether the civilisation of the West and tasted the age-old civilisation of the East, the civilisation that was in full swing when my ancestors were naked savages hunting the deer and the bear and the wolf in the swamps and marshes of Northern Europe. I had thought I had reached that civilisation when I lived in Peking, when I dwelt alone in a temple in the mountains, when I went to Pao Ting Fu, but here in T'ai Yuan Fu the feeling deepened. Only the mission stations stood between me and this strange thing. The people in the streets looked at me askance, over the compound wall came the curious sounds of an ancient people at work, the shrieking of the greased wheel-barrows, the beating of gongs, the whir of the rattle of the embroidery silk seller, the tinkling of the bells that were hung round the necks of the donkeys and the mules, the shouting of the hucksters selling scones and meat balls, all the sounds of an industrious city, and I was an outsider, the alien who was something of a curiosity, but who anyhow was of no account. Frankly, I don't like being of no account. As a matter of fact, I shocked all Chinese ideas of correct deportment. When a well-bred Chinese gentleman arrives at a strange place, he does not look around him, he shows no curiosity whatever in his surroundings, he retires to his room, his meal is brought to him and he remains quietly in his resting-place till it is time for him to take his departure, and what applies to a man, applies, of course, in an exaggerated degree, to a woman. Now I had come to see China, and I made

every effort in my power to see all I could. I tremble to think what the inhabitants of Shansi must have thought of me! Possibly, since I outraged all their canons of decency, I was lucky in that they only found me of no account.

All the while I was in T'ai Yuan Fu I was exceedingly anxious about the measure of safety for a foreign woman outside the walls, and opinions differed as to the wisdom of my venture, but, on the whole, those I consulted thought I would be all right. They rather envied me, in fact, the power to go wandering, but on one point they were very sure: it was a pity Dr Edwards, the veteran missionary doctor, was not there, because he knew more about China and travelling there than all the rest of them put together. But he had gone out on his own account and was on the way to Hsi An Fu, the town I had given up as hopeless. He did not propose to approach it through the Tungkwan, but from the north, and they did not expect him to have any difficulty.

Then I found I had not brought enough money with me and the missionaries lent me more, and they engaged muleteers with four mules and a donkey that were to take me across the thousand miles that lay between the capital of Shansi and that of Kansu. Two men were in charge, and the cost of getting there, everything included—the men to feed themselves and their animals and I only to be responsible for the feeding and lodging of my own servants—was exactly eighteen pounds. It has always seemed to me ridiculously cheap. Money must go a long way in China for it to be possible for two men to take four mules and a donkey laden a thousand miles, and then come back unladen and keep themselves by the way, for so small a sum.

So I sent off my servants the day before, then Buchanan and I bade good-bye to the missionaries and went the first day's journey back along the line to Yu Tze, where the road

started for the Yellow River, and as I left the train and was taken by Tsai Chih Fu and Mr Wang to the enclosure of the inn where they had spent the night I felt that I had indeed left the West behind, and the only companion and friend I had was James Buchanan. It was lucky he was a host in himself.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST SIGN OF UNREST

I WAS to ride a pack-mule. Now riding a pack-mule at any time is an unpleasant way of getting along the road. I know no more uncomfortable method. It is not quite as comfortable as sitting upon a table with one's legs dangling, for the table is still, the mule is moving, and one's legs dangle on either side of his neck. There are neither reins nor stirrups, and the mule goes at his own sweet will, and in a very short time your back begins to ache, after a few hours that aching is intolerable. To get over this difficulty the missionary had cut the legs off a chair and suggested that, mounted on the pack, I might sit in it comfortably. I don't know whether I could, for the mule objected.

It was a sunny morning with a bright blue sky above, and all seemed auspicious except my mule, who expressed in no measured language his dislike to that chair. Tsai Chih Fu had no sooner hoisted me into it than up he went on his hind legs and, using them as a pivot, stood on end pawing the air. Everybody in the inn-yard shrieked and yelled except, I hope, myself, and then Tsai Chih Fu, how I know not, rescued me from my unpleasant position, and thankfully I found myself upon the firm ground again. He was a true Chinese mule and objected to all innovations. He stood meekly enough once the chair was removed.

I wanted to cross Asia and here I was faced with disaster at the very outset! Finally I was put upon the pack minus the chair, Buchanan was handed up to me and

nestled down beside me, and the procession started. My heart sank. I don't mind acknowledging it now. I had at least a thousand miles to go, and within half-an-hour of the start I had thoroughly grasped the fact that of all modes of progression a pack-mule is the most abominable. There are no words at my command to express its discomforts.

Very little did I see of the landscape of Shansi that day. I was engaged in hanging on to my pack and wondering how I could stick it out. We passed along the usual hopeless cart-track of China. I had eschewed Peking carts as being the very acme of misery, but I was beginning to reflect that anyhow a cart was comparatively passive misery while the back of a pack-mule was decidedly active. Buchanan was a good little dog, but he mentioned several times in the course of that day that he was uncomfortable and he thought I was doing a fool thing. I was much of his opinion.

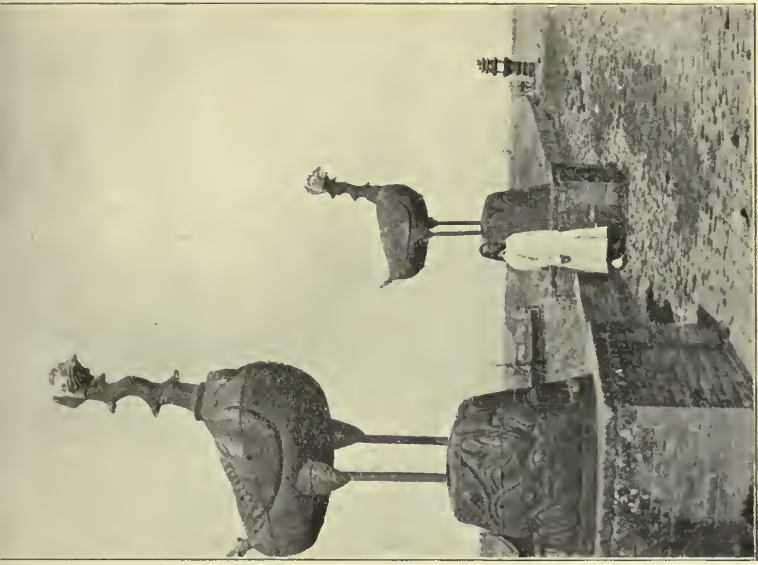
The day was never ending. All across a plain we went, with rough fields just showing green on either hand, through walled villages, through little towns, and I cared for nothing, I was too intent on holding on, on wishing the day would end, and at last, as the dusk was falling, the muleteer pointed out, clear-cut against the evening sky, the long walls of a large town—Taiku. At last ! At last !

I was to stay the night at a large mission school kept by a Mr and Mrs Wolf, and I only longed for the comfort of a bed, any sort of a bed so long as it was flat and warm and kept still. We went on and on, we got into the suburbs of the town, and we appeared to go round and round, through an unending length of dark, narrow streets, full of ruts and holes, with the dim loom of houses on either side, and an occasional gleam of light from a dingy kerosene lamp or Chinese paper lantern showing through the paper windows.



BRONZE BASE OF PHOENIX. FEN CHOU FU.

See page 54.



THE PHOENIXES ON THE WALL AT FEN CHOU FU.

See page 54.



TREE FULL OF BIRD'S NESTS IN EASTERN SUBURB FEN CHOU FU.



TEMPLE FROM THE WALL FEN CHOU FU.

See page 35.

Again and again we stopped and spoke to men who were merely muffled shapeless figures in the darkness, and again we went on. I think now that in all probability neither Tsai Chih Fu nor Mr Wang understood enough of the dialect to make the muleteers or the people of whom we inquired understand where we wanted to go, but at last, more probably by good luck than good management, somebody, seeing I was a foreigner, sent us to the foreigners they knew, those who kept a school for a hundred and twenty-five boys in the lovely Flower Garden. It certainly was lovely, an old-world Chinese house, with little courtyards and ponds and terraces and flowers and trees—and that comfortable bed I had been desiring so long. As we entered the courtyard in the darkness and Tsai Chih Fu lifted me down, the bed was the only thing I could think of.

And yet next day I started again—I wonder now I dared—and we skirted the walls of Taiku. We had gone round two sides and then, as I always do when I am dead-tired, I had a bad attack of breathlessness. Stay on that pack I knew I could not, so I made my master of transport lift me down, and I sat on a bank for the edification of all the small boys in the district who, even if they had known how ill I felt, probably would not have cared, and I decided there and then that pack-mule riding was simply impossible and something would have to be done. Therefore, with great difficulty, I made my way back to the mission school and asked Mr Wolf what he would recommend.

Again were missionaries kindness itself to me. They sympathised with my trouble, they took me in and made me their guest, refusing to take any money for it, though they added to their kindness by allowing me to pay for the keep of my servants, and they strongly recommended that I should have a litter. A litter then I decided I would have.

It is, I should think, the very earliest form of human conveyance. It consists of two long poles laid about as far apart as the shafts of an ordinary cart, in the middle is hung a coarse-meshed rope net, and over that a tilt of matting—the sort of stuff we see tea-chests covered with in this country. Into the net is tumbled all one's small impedimenta—clothes-bags, kettles, anything that will not conveniently go on mule-back; the bedding is put on top, rugs and cushions arranged to the future inmate's satisfaction, then you get inside and the available people about are commandeered to hoist the concern on to the backs of the couple of mules, who object very strongly. The head of the one behind is in the shafts, and the ends rest in his pack-saddle, and the hind quarters of the one in front are in the shafts, just as in an ordinary buggy. Of course there are no reins, and at first I felt very much at the mercy of the mules, though I am bound to say the big white mule who conducted my affairs seemed to thoroughly understand his business. Still it is uncomfortable, to say the least of it, to find yourself going, apparently quite unattended, down steep and rocky paths, or right into a rushing river. But on the whole a litter is a very comfortable way of travelling; after a pack-mule it was simply heaven, and I had no doubts whatever that I could comfortably do the thousand miles, lessened now, I think, by about thirty, that lay before me. If I reached Lan Chou Fu there would be time enough to think how I would go on farther. And here my muleteers had me. When I arranged for a litter, I paid them, of course, extra, and I said another mule was to be got to carry some of the loads. They accepted the money and agreed. But I may say that that other mule never materialised. I accepted the excuse when we left Taiku that there was no other mule to be hired, and by the time that excuse had

worn thin I had so much else to think about that I bore up, though not even a donkey was added to our equipment.

Money I took with me in lumps of silver, sycee—shoes, they called them—and a very unsatisfactory way it is of carrying cash. It is very heavy and there is no hiding the fact that you have got it. We changed little bits for our daily needs as we went along, just as little as we could, because the change in cash was an intolerable burden. On one occasion in Fen Chou Fu I gave Tsai Chih Fu a very small piece of silver to change and intimated that I would like to see the result. That piece of silver I reckon was worth about five shillings, but presently my master of transport and one of the muleteers came staggering in and laid before me rows and rows of cash strung on strings! I never felt so wealthy in my life. After that I never asked for my change. I was content to keep a sort of general eye on the expenditure, and I expect the only leakage was the accepted percentage which every servant levies on his master. When they might easily have cheated me, I found my servants showed always a most praiseworthy desire for my welfare. And yet Mr Wang did surprise me occasionally. While I was in Pao Ting Fu I had found it useful to learn to count in Chinese, so that roughly I knew what people at the food-stalls were charging me. On one occasion I saw some little cakes powdered with sesame seed that I thought I should like and I instructed Mr Wang to buy me one. I heard him ask the price and the man say three cash, and my interpreter turned to me and said that it was four! I was so surprised I said nothing. It may have been the regulation percentage, and twenty-five per cent is good anywhere, but at the moment it seemed to me extraordinary that a man who considered himself as belonging to the upper classes should find it worth his while to do me out of one cash, which was worth—

no, I give it up. I don't know what it was worth. 10.53 dollars went to the pound when I was in Shansi and about thirteen hundred cash to the dollar, so I leave it to some better mathematician than I am to say what I was done out of on that occasion.

There was another person who was very pleased with the litter and that was James Buchanan. Poor little man, just before we left the Flower Garden he was badly bitten by a dog, so badly he could no longer walk, and I had to carry him on a cushion alongside me in the litter. I never knew before how dearly one could love a dog, for I was terrified lest he should die and I should be alone in the world. He lay still and refused to eat, and every movement seemed to pain him, and whenever I struck a missionary—they were the only people, of course, with whom I could converse—they always suggested his back was broken.

I remember at Ki Hsien, where I was entertained most hospitably, and where the missionary's wife was most sympathetic, he was so ill that I sat up all night with him and thought he would surely die. And yet in the morning he was still alive. He moaned when we lifted him into the litter and whined pitifully when I got out, as I had to several times to take photographs.

"Don't leave me, don't leave me to the mercy of the Chinese," he said, and greeted me with howls of joy when I returned. It was a great day for both of us when he got a little better and could put his pretty little black and white head round the tilt and keep his eye upon me while I worked. But really he was an ideal patient, such a good, patient little dog, so grateful for any attention that was paid him, and from that time he began to mend and by the time I reached Fen Chou Fu was almost his old gay happy little self again.

Taiku is a dying town over two thousand years old, and I have before seen dead towns in China. Fewer and fewer grow the inhabitants, the grass grows in the streets, the bricks fall away from the walls, the houses fall down, until but a few shepherds or peasant farmers dwell where once were the busy haunts of merchants and tradesmen.

From Taiku I went on across the rich Shansi plain. Now in the springtime in the golden sunshine the wheat was just above the ground, turning the land into one vivid green, the sky was a cloudless blue, and all was bathed in the golden sunshine of Northern China. The air was clear and invigorating as champagne. "Every prospect pleases," as the hymn says, "and only man is vile." He wasn't vile; really I think he was a very good fellow in his own way, which was in a dimension into which I have never and am never likely to enter, but he was certainly unclean, ignorant, a serf, poverty-stricken with a poverty we hardly conceive of in the West, and the farther away I found myself from T'ai Yuan Fu the more friendly did I find him. This country was not like England, where until the last four years has been in the memory of our fathers and our fathers' fathers only peace. Even now, now as I write, when the World War is on, an air raid is the worst that has befallen the home-staying citizens of Britain. But Shansi has been raided again and again. Still the land was tilled, well tilled; on every hand were men working hard, working from dawn to dark, and working, to a stranger's eyes, for the good of the community, for the fields are not divided by hedge or fence; there is an occasional poplar or elm, and there are graves everywhere, but there is nothing to show where Wang's land ends and Lui's begins. All through the cultivated land wanders, apparently without object, the zigzag track

of sand and ruts and stones known as the Great South Road, impossible for anything with wheels but a Chinese cart, and often impossible for that. There are no wayside cottages, nothing save those few trees to break the monotony, only here and there is a village sheltering behind high walls, sometimes of mud, but generally of brick, and stout, substantial brick at that; and if, as is not infrequent, there is a farmhouse alone, it, too, is behind high brick walls, built like a baronial castle of mediæval times, with a look-out tower and room behind the walls not only for the owner's family even unto the third and fourth generation, but for all his hinds and his dependents as well. The whole is built evidently with a view to defence, and built apparently to last for hundreds of years. For Shansi is worth raiding. There is oil and there is wheat in abundance. There is money too, much of which comes from Mongolia and Manchuria. The bankers (the Shansi men are called the Jews of China) wander across and trade far into Russian territory while still their home is in agricultural Shansi, and certain it is that any disturbances in these countries, even in Russia, affect the prosperity of Shansi. I wonder if the Russian Revolution has been felt there. Very probably.

Shansi is rich in other things too not as yet appreciated by the Chinaman. She has iron and copper and coal that has barely been touched, for the popular feeling is against mining. They say that no part of the globe contains such stores of coal. I hesitate about quoting a German, but they told me that Baron Reichthoffen has said that this province has enough coal to supply the world for two thousand years at the present rate of consumption. I haven't the faintest notion whether the Baron's opinion is worth anything, but if it is, it is no wonder that Germany, with her eye for ever on the main chance, has felt deeply being thrust out of China.

With ample coal, and with iron alongside it, what might not Shansi be worth to exploit !

Ki Hsien is a little walled town five *li* round. Roughly three *li* make a mile, but it is a little doubtful. For instance, from Taiku to Ki Hsien is fifty *li*, and that fifty *li* is sixteen miles, from Ki Hsien to Ping Yao is also fifty *li*, but that is only fourteen English miles. The land, say the Chinese, explaining this discrepancy, was measured in time of famine when it wasn't of any value ! A very Chinese explanation.

The city of Ki Hsien is very, very crowded ; there were hundreds of tiny courtyards and flat roofs. In the picture of the missionary's house I have not been able to get the roof in because the courtyard—and it was a fairly large courtyard as courtyards in the city go—was not big enough. I stood as far away as I possibly could. Mr and Mrs Falls belonged to the Chinese Inland Mission and the house they lived in was over three hundred years old. Like many of the houses in Shansi, it was two storeys high and, strangely enough, a thing I have never seen anywhere else, the floors upstairs were of brick.

I do not know how I would like to live in such a crowded community, but it has its advantages on occasion. At the time of the revolution, when those missionaries who had come through the Boxer times were all troubled and anxious about their future, the Falls decided to stay on at their station, and a rich native doctor, a heathen, but a friend, who lived next door, commended that decision.

"Why go away ?" said he. "Your courtyard adjoins mine. If there is trouble we put up a ladder and you come over to us."

And there was hint of trouble then. As we sat at supper there came in the Chinese postman in his shabby uniform of dirty blue and white, with his large military cap pushed on

the back of his head, and he brought to the Falls a letter from Dr Edwards, the missionary doctor all foreign T'ai Yuan Fu thought I ought to meet.

When I was within reach of the Peking foreign daily papers they mentioned Pai Lang as one might mention a burglar in London, sandwiching him in between the last racing fixtures or the latest Cinema attraction, but from a little walled town within a day's march of Hsi An Fu the veteran missionary wrote very differently, and we in this other little walled town read breathlessly.

White Wolf had surrounded Hsi An Fu, he said; it was impossible to get there and he was returning.

The darkness had fallen, the lamp in the middle of the table threw a light on the letter and on the faces of the middle-aged missionary and his wife who pored over it. It might mean so much to them. It undoubtedly meant much to their friends in Hsi An Fu, and it meant much to me, the outsider who had but an hour ago walked into their lives. For I began to fear lest this robber might affect me after all, lest in coming north I was not going to outflank him. According to Dr Edwards, he had already taken a little walled city a hundred *li*—about a day's journey—north-west of Hsi An Fu, and when White Wolf took a town it meant murder and rapine. And sitting there in the old Chinese room these two people who knew China told me in no measured terms what might happen to a woman travelling alone in disturbed country.

Missionaries, they said, never left their stations when the country was disturbed, they were safer at home, surrounded by their friends. Once the country is raided by a robber band—and remember this is no uncommon thing in China—all the bad characters in the country come to the fore, and robber bands that have nothing to do with the original

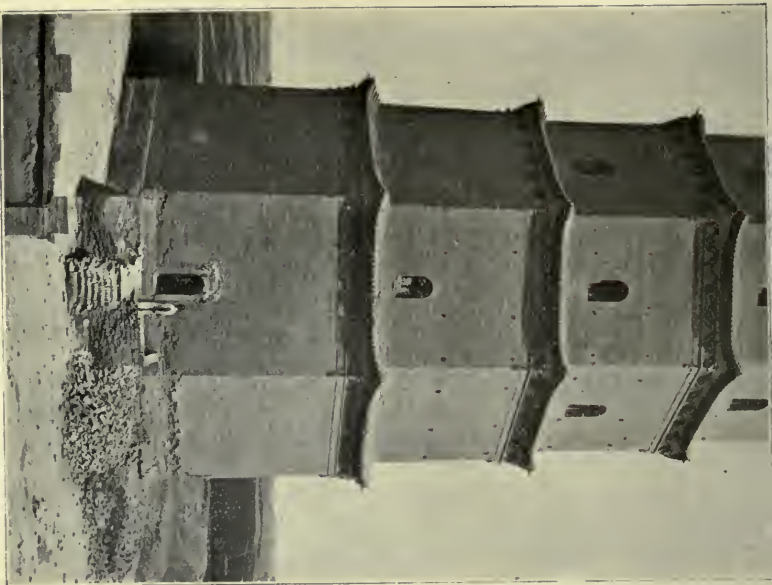


HEAPS OF STONES ON THE WALLS FEN CHOU FU.

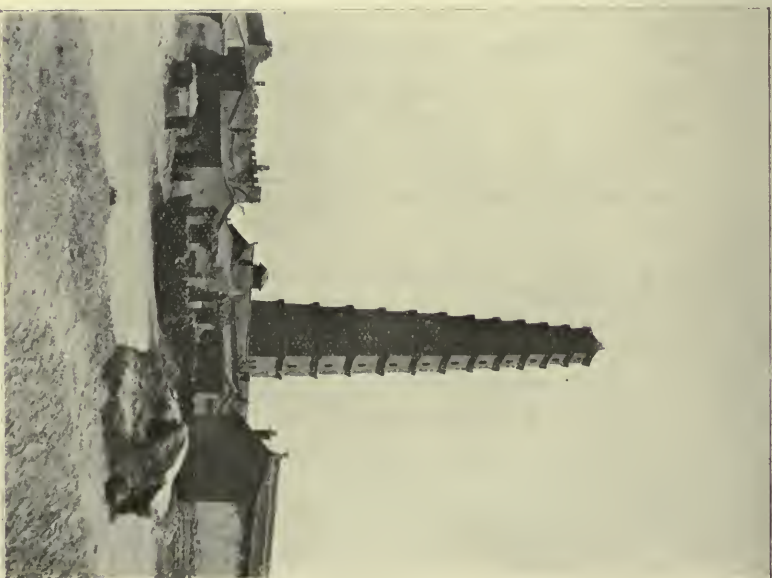


RUBBISH HEAPS OF CENTURIES OUTSIDE IEN CHOU FU.

See page 56.



NEARER VIEW OF TALL PAGODA AT FEN CHOU FU.



ONE OF THE TALLEST PAGODAS IN CHINA.

one spring into existence, the cities shut their gates to all strangers, and passports are so much waste paper. Between ourselves, I have a feeling they always are in China. I could hardly tell the difference between mine and my agreement with my muleteers, and I have an uneasy feeling that occasionally the agreement was presented when it should have been the passport.

Now no one could be certain whether Pai Lang intended to take Lan Chou Fu, but it looked as if that were his objective. If he took the city it would not be much good my getting there, because the bankers would certainly not be able to supply me with money; even if he only raided the country round, it would be so disturbed that my muleteers would be bound to take alarm. If they left me, and they certainly would leave me if they thought there was a chance of their mules being taken, I should be done. It would spell finish not only to the expedition but to my life. A foreigner, especially a woman without money and without friends, would be helpless in China. Why should the people help her? It takes them all they know to keep their own heads above water. And Kansu was always turbulent; it only wanted a match to set the fire alight. Mr and Mrs Falls—bless them for their kindness and interest!—thought I should be mad to venture.

So there in the sitting-room which had been planned for a merchant prince and had come into the possession of these two who desired to bring the religion of the West to China I sat and discussed this new obstacle. After coming so far, laying out so much money, could I turn back when danger did not directly press? I felt I could not. And yet my hosts pointed out to me that if danger did directly threaten I would not be able to get away. If Pai Lang did take Lan Chou Fu, or even if he did not, it might well be worth

his while to turn east and raid fertile Shansi. In a little town like Ki Hsien there was loot well worth having. In the revolution a banker there was held to ransom, and paid, as the people put it, thirty times ten thousand taels (a tael is roughly three shillings, according to the price of silver), and they said it was but a trifle to him—a flea-bite, I believe, was the exact term—and I can well believe, in the multitude of worse parasites that afflict the average Chinaman, a flea-bite means much less than it does in England.

However, I didn't feel like giving up just yet, so I decided to go on to Fen Chou Fu, where was a big American mission, and see what they had to say about the matter. If then I had to flee, the missionaries would very likely be fleeing too, and I should have company.

And the very next day I had what I took for a warning.

It was a gorgeous day, a cloudless blue sky and brilliant sunshine, and I passed too many things of interest worth photographing. There were some extraordinary tombs, there was a quaint village gateway—the Gate of Everlasting Peace they call it—but I was glad to get back into my litter and hoped to stay there for a little, for getting out of a litter presents some difficulties unless you are very active indeed. It is a good long drop across the shafts on to the ground; the only other alternative is to drop down behind the mule's hind quarters and slip out under those shafts, but I never had sufficient confidence in my mule to do that, so that I generally called upon Tsai Chih Fu to lift me down. I had set out full of tremors, but taking photographs of the peaceful scenes soothed my ruffled nerves. I persuaded myself my fears had been born of the night and the dread of loneliness which sometimes overtakes me when I am in company and thinking of setting out alone, leaving kindly faces behind.

And then I came upon it, the first sign of unrest.

The winding road rose a little and I could see right ahead of us a great crowd of people evidently much agitated, and I called to Mr Wang to know what was the matter.

"Repeat, please," said he as usual, and then rode forward and came back saying, "I do not know the word."

"What word?"

"What is a lot of people and a dead man?"

"Ah!" said I, jumping to conclusions unwarrantably, "that is a funeral."

"A funeral!" said he triumphantly. "I have learned a new word."

Mr Wang was always learning a new word and rejoicing over it, but, as I had hired him as a finished product, I hardly think it was unreasonable of me to be aggrieved, and to feel that I was paying him a salary for the pleasure of teaching him English. However, on this occasion his triumph was short-lived.

"Would you like to see the funeral?" he said.

I intimated that I would. My stalwart master of transport lifted me down and the crowded people made a lane for me to pass through, and half of them turned their attention to me, for though there were missionaries in the big towns, a foreigner was a sight to these country people, and, Mr Wang going first, we arrived at a man with his head cut off! Mercifully he was mixed up with a good deal of matting and planks, but still there was no mistaking the poor dead feet in their worn Chinese shoes turned up to the sky.

Considering we are mortal, it is extraordinary how seldom the ordinary person looks upon death. Always it comes with a shock. At least it did. I suppose this war has accustomed some of us to the sight, so that we take the result of the meeting of mortal man with his last friend on

earth more as a matter of course, as indeed it should be taken. Of course I know this is one of the results of the war.

My sister's son, staying with me after six months in hospital, consequent upon a wound at Gallipoli, came home from a stroll one day and reported that he had seen nothing, and then at dinner that night mentioned in a casual manner that he had seen two dead men being carried out of a large building and put in a motor car.

I said in astonishment :

"They couldn't have been dead !"

"Of course they were. Do you think I don't know dead men when I see them ? I've seen plenty."

So many that the sight of a couple in the streets of a quiet little country town seemed not even an occasion for remark.

But I was not even accustomed to thinking of dead men and I turned upon Mr Wang angrily :

"But that isn't a funeral. That's a corpse," and once more to my irritation he rejoiced over a new word.

"Who killed him ?" I asked.

"They think an enemy has done this thing," said he sententiously and unnecessarily, as, ignorant as I am of things Chinese, I should hardly think even they could have called it a friendly action. The body had been found the day before, and the people were much troubled about it. An official from Ping Yow—a coroner, I suppose we should call him—was coming out to inquire about it, and because the sun was already hot the people had raised a little screen of matting with a table and chairs where he could sit to hold inquiry.

And here was the thing the missionaries had warned me against. Trouble, said they, always begins by the finding

of dead bodies that cannot be accounted for, and this body was on the Great South Road. It might be only a case of common murder such as one might perchance meet in Piccadilly, possibly it was due to the bands of soldiers that were pouring into the country—to defend the crossings of the Yellow River, some people said—but it was to me an emphatic reminder that the warnings of Mr and Mrs Falls had not been given lightly, and I meditated upon it all the way to Ping Yow.

All day long the soldiers had been pouring through Ki Hsien, all night long they poured through the suburbs of Ping Yow. Not through the town itself—the townspeople were not going to allow that if they could help themselves; and as it was evidently a forced march and the regiments were travelling by night, they could help themselves, for every city gate is shut at sundown. The China Inland Mission had a station at an old camel inn in the eastern suburb, and there the missionary's young wife was alone with five young children, babies all of them, and there I found her. I think she was very glad to see me, anyhow I was someone to discuss things with, and we two women talked and talked over our evening meal. She was a tall, pretty young woman—not even the ugly Chinese dress and her hair drawn back, not a hair out of place, Chinese fashion, could disguise her pathetic beauty. And she was a countrywoman of mine, born and brought up in the same state, Victoria, and her native town was Ararat, green and fresh among the hills. And how she talked Australia! What a beautiful land it was! And the people! The free, independent people! The women who walked easily and feared no man! To thoroughly appreciate a democratic country you should dwell in effete China. But she feared too, this woman, feared for herself and her five tiny children. It would be

no easy job to get away. I told her of the dead man I had seen—how should I not tell her?—and she trembled.

“Very likely it is the soldiers,” she said. “I am afraid of the Chinese soldiers.” And so am I in bulk, though taken singly they seem such harmless little chaps.

“When the willow is green and the apricot yellow in the fifth moon,” said a metrical inscription on a stone dug up at Nankin in that year—the fatal year 1914—“terrible things will happen in the land of Han.” Terrible things, it seems to me, always happen in the land of Han; but if it spoke for the great world beyond, truly the stone spoke truth, though we did not know it then.

In the evening back from the country where he had been preaching for the last day or two came my Australian’s husband, and there also came in to see the stranger two missionaries from the other side of the town. They sat there, these men and women of British race, dressed in the outlandish costume of the people around them—a foolish fashion, it seems to me, for a European in unadulterated Chinese dress looks as ugly and out of place as a Chinese in a stiff collar and a bowler hat. And all the evening we discussed the soldiers and the dead man I had seen, and opinions differed as to the portent.

It is true, said one of them who had been in the country many years, and was a missionary pure and simple, with eyes for nothing but the work he had in hand—which is probably the way to work for success—that a dead body, particularly a dead body by the highroad, is often a sign of unrest, but again, quite as often it means no more than a dead body in any other place. If he had turned back for every dead body he had seen——

Well, I thought I would not turn back either. Not yet, at least.

Never was I sorrier for missionaries, I who have always written against missionaries, than I was for this young countrywoman of mine who never thought of being sorry for herself. It was a big ugly mission compound, the rooms, opening one into another, were plain and undecorated, and the little children as a great treat watered the flowers that struggled up among the stones of the dusty courtyard, and the very watering-can was made with Chinese ingenuity from an old kerosene tin. It seemed to me those little children would have had such a much better chance growing up in their mother's land, or in their father's land—he was a Canadian—among the free peoples of the earth. But who am I, to judge? No one in the world, it seems to me, wants help so much as the poorer Chinese, whose life is one long battle with disease and poverty; and perhaps these poorer missionaries help a little, a very little; but the poorer the mission the poorer the class they reach, and the sacrifice, as I saw it here, is so great.

Next morning we arose early, and I breakfasted with my host and hostess and their five children. The children's grace rings in my ears yet, always I think it will ring there, the childish voices sung it with such fervour and such faith:

“Every day, every day, we bless Thee, we bless Thee,
We praise Thy Name, we praise Thy Name,
For ever and for ever!”

There in the heart of China these little children, who had, it seemed to me, so very little to be grateful for, thanked their God with all their hearts, and when their elders with the same simple fervour went down on their knees and asked their God to guide and help the stranger and set her on her way, though it was against all my received canons of good taste, what could I do but be simply grateful.

Ping Yow is a large town set in the midst of a wheat-

growing country, and it is built in the shape of a turtle, at least so I was told. I could see for myself that its walls were not the usual four-square set to the points of the compass, but seemed irregular, with many little towers upon them. These towers, it seems, were built in memory of the teachers of Confucius—this is the only intimation I have had that he had seventy-two; and there were over three thousand small excrescences—again I only repeat what I was told; I did not count them, and if I had I would surely have counted them wrong—like sentry-boxes in memory of his disciples. I do not know why Ping Yow thus dedicates itself to the memory of the great sage. It needs something to commend it, for it remains in my mind as a bare, ugly, crowded town, with an extra amount of dust and dirt and heat, and no green thing to break the monotony.

And I set forth, and in spite of all I still faced West.



MISSIONARY'S TEACHER AND PRIEST.

See page 57.



LADIES OF EASY VIRTUE IN THE TAOIST TEMPLE.

See page 57.



AUTHOR'S LITTER NEAR PAGODA ON THE WAYSIDE.

See page 57.



FARMER PLOUGHING AND SMALL PAGODA FEN CHOU FU.

See page 57.

CHAPTER IV

A CITY UNDER THE HILLS

IN my wanderings across Shansi I came in contact with two missionary systems run with the same object in view but carried out in diametrically opposite ways. Of course I speak as an outsider. I criticise as one who only looks on, but after all it is an old saw that the onlooker sees most of the game. There are, of course, many missions in China, and I often feel that if the Chinaman were not by nature a philosopher he would sometimes be a little confused by salvation offered him by foreigners of all sects and classes, ranging from Roman Catholics to Seventh Day Adventists. Personally I have received much kindness from English Baptists, from the China Inland Mission and from American Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Amongst them all I—who frankly do not believe in missions, believing that the children at home should first be fed—found much to admire, much individual courage and sacrifice, but for the systems, I felt the American missions were the most efficient, far the most likely to attain the end in view.

The Chinaman, to begin with, sees no necessity for his own conversion. Unlike the ordinary black man, he neither admires nor envies the white man, and is given to thinking his own ways are infinitely preferable. But the Chinaman is a man of sound common-sense, he immensely admires efficiency, he is a great believer in education, and when a mission comes to him fully equipped with doctors, nurses and hospitals, teachers and schools, he, once he has over-

come his dread of anything new, begins to avail himself first of the doctor and the hospital, for the sore need of China is for medical attendance, and then of the schools. Then comes conversion. They tell me that there are many genuine converts. I have only noticed that the great rich American missions rake in converts by tens and twenties, where they come dribbling in in units to the faith missions, which offer no such advantages as medical attendance or tuition. The faith missionaries work hard enough. I have seen a woman just come in from a week's missionary tour in a district where, she explained, she had slept on the *k'angs* with the other women of the household, and she was stripping off her clothes most carefully and combing her long hair with a tooth-comb, because all women of the class she visited among were afflicted with those little parasites that we do not mention. The Chinese have a proverb that "the Empress herself has three," so it is no shame. She thought nothing of her sacrifice, that was what she had come for, everyone else was prepared to do the same; but when so much is given I like to see great results, as in the American missions. They are rich, and the Chinaman, with a few glaring exceptions, is a very practical person. To ask him to change his faith for good that will work out in another world is asking rather much of him. If he is going to do so he feels he may as well have a God who will give him something in return for being outcast. At least that is the way I read the results. Look at Fen Chou, for instance, where the Americans are thriving and a power in the town, and look at Yung Ning Chou, farther west, where a Scandinavian faith mission has been established for over twenty years. They may have a few adherents in the country round, but in the city itself—a city of merchants—they have, I believe, not made a single convert.

Of course the China Inland Mission does not lay itself

out to be rich. However many subscriptions come in, the individual missionary gets no more than fifty pounds a year ; if more money comes, more missionaries are established, if less, then the luckless individual missionary gets as much of the fifty pounds as funds allow. The Founder of the Faith was poor and lowly, therefore the missionaries must follow in His footsteps. I understand the reason, the nobility, that lies in the sacrifice implied when men and women give their lives for their faith, but not only do I like best the results of the American system, but I dislike exceedingly that a European should be poor in an Oriental country. If missionaries must go to China, I like them to go for the benefit of the Chinese and for the honour and glory of the race to which they belong, and not for the good of their own souls.

I came into Fen Chou Fu and went straight to the large compound of the American missionaries, three men and three women from Oberlin College, Ohio. They had a hospital, they had a school, they had a kindergarten, the whole compound was a flourishing centre of industry. They teach their faith, for that is what they have come out for, but also they teach the manifold knowledge of the West. Sanitation and hygiene loom large in their curriculum, and heaven knows, without taking into consideration any future life, they must be a blessing to those men and women who under cruel conditions must see this life through. These six missionaries at Fen Chou Fu do their best to improve those conditions with a practical American common-sense and thoroughness that won my admiration.

Fen Chou Fu, unlike T'ai Yuan Fu, is friendly, and has always been friendly, to the foreigner ; even during the Boxer trouble they were loath to kill their missionaries, and when the order came that they were to be slain, declined to allow it to be done within their walls, but sent them out, and they

were killed about seven miles outside the city—a very Chinese way of freeing themselves from blood-guiltiness.

The town struck me as curiously peaceful after the unrest and the never-ending talk of riot, robbery and murder I had heard all along the road. The weather was getting warm and we all sat at supper on the verandah of Dr Watson's house, with the lamps shedding a subdued light on the table, and the sounds of the city coming to us softened by the distance, and Mr Watt Pye assured me he had been out in the country and there was nothing to fear, nothing. The Chinaman as he had seen him had many sins, at least errors of conduct that a missionary counts sin, but as far as he knew I might go safely to the Russian border. He had not been in the country very long, not, I fancy, a fifth of the time Dr Edwards had been there, but, listening to him, I hoped once more.

The town is old. It was going as a city in 2205 B.C., and it is quite unlike any other I have come across in China. It is a small square city about nine *li* round, and on each of the four sides are suburbs, also walled. Between them and the city are the gully-like roads leading to the gates. The eastern suburb is nearly twice as large as the main city, and is surrounded by a high brick wall, but the other suburbs have only walls like huge banks of clay, on the top the grass grows, and on my way in I was not surprised to see on top of this clay-bank a flock of sheep browsing. It seemed a very appropriate place for sheep, for at first sight there is nothing to show that this was the top of a town wall.

When the Manchus drove out the Mings, the vanquished Imperial family took refuge in this western town and rebuilt the walls, which had been allowed to fall into disrepair, and they set about the job in a fashion worthy of Babylon

itself. The bricks were made seven miles away in the hills, and passed from hand to hand down a long line of men till they reached their destination and were laid one on top of another to face the great clay-bank forty-six feet high that guards the city. According to Chinese ideas, the city needs guarding not from human enemies only. The mountains to the west and north overshadow it, and all manner of evil influences come from the north, and the people fear greatly their effect upon the town. It was possible it might never get a good magistrate, or that, having got one, he might die, and therefore they took every precaution they could to ward off such a calamity. Gods they put in their watch tower over the gate, and they sit there still, carved wooden figures, a great fat god—if a city is to be prosperous must not its god be prosperous too?—surrounded by lesser satellites. Some are fallen now, and the birds of the air roost upon them, and the dust and the cobwebs have gathered upon them, but not yet will they be cleared away. In a chamber below are rusty old-world cannon flung aside in a heap as so much useless lumber, and, below, all the busy traffic of the city passes in and out beneath the arches of the gateway. In that gateway are two upright stones between which all wheeled traffic must pass, the distance between these stones marking the length of the axle allowed by the narrow city streets. Any vehicle having a greater length of axle cannot pass in. No mere words can describe the awful condition of the roads of Shansi, and to lessen as far as possible the chance of an upset the country man makes his axle very wide, and, knowing this, the town man notifies at his gates the width of the vehicle that can pass in his streets. No other can enter.

Besides the gods over the gateway, Fen Chou Fu, owing to its peculiar position under the hills, requires other guarding,

and there are two tall bronze phoenixes on the wall close to the northern watch tower. I was quite pleased to make the acquaintance of a phoenix, as, though I have read about them, I had never met them before. In Fen Chou Fu it appears that a phoenix is between thirty and forty feet high, built like a comic representation of a chicken, with a long curly neck and a cock's comb upon his head. It would indeed be a churlish, evil spirit who was not moved to laughter at the sight. But though the form is crude, on the bronze bases and on the birds themselves are worked beautifully the details of a long story. Dragons and foxes and rabbits, and many strange symbols that I do not understand come into it, but how they help to guard the city, except by pleasing the gods or amusing the evil spirits, I must confess I cannot imagine. Certainly the city fathers omit the most necessary care: once the walls are finished, the mason is apparently never called in, and they are drifting to decay. Everywhere the bricks are falling out, and when I was there in the springtime the birds of the air found there a secure resting-place. There were crows and hawks and magpies and whistling kites popping in and out of the holes so made, in their beaks straws and twigs for the making of their nests. They would be secure probably in any case, for the Chinese love birds, but here they are doubly secure, for only with difficulty and by the aid of a long rope could any man possibly reach them.

The ramps up to those walls were extremely steep—it was a heart-breaking process to get on top—but Buchanan and I, accompanied by the master of transport carrying the camera, and often by Mr Leete, one of the missionaries, took exercise there; for in a walled city in the narrow streets there is seldom enough air for my taste. The climate here is roughly summer and winter, for though so short a while ago it had

been freezing at night, already it was very hot in the middle of the day, and the dust rose up from the narrow streets in clouds. A particularly bad cloud of dust generally indicated pigs, which travel a good deal in Northern China, even as sheep and cattle do in Australia. In Shantung a man sets out with a herd of pigs and travels them slowly west, very slowly, and they feed along the wayside, though what they feed on heaven only knows, for it looks to me as though there is nothing, still possibly they pick up something, and I suppose the idea is that they arrive at the various places in time for the harvest, or when grain and products are cheapest. There are inns solely given over to pigs and their drivers in Shansi, and the stench outside some of those in Fen Chou Fu was just a little taller than the average smell, and the average smell in a Chinese city is something to be always remembered. There were other things to be seen from the top of the wall too—long lines of camels bearing merchandise to and from the town, donkeys, mules, carts, all churning up the dust of the unkempt roadway, small-footed women seated in their doorways looking out upon the life of the streets, riding donkeys or peeping out of the tilts of the carts. I could see into the courtyards of the well-to-do, with their little ponds and bridges and gardens. All the life of the city lay beneath us. Possibly that is why one meets so very, very seldom any Chinese on the wall—it may be, it probably is, I should think, bad taste to look into your neighbour's courtyard.

And the wall justified its existence, mediæval and out of date as it seemed to me. There along the top at intervals were little heaps of good-sized stones, placed there by the magistrate in the revolution for the defence of the town. At first I smiled and thought how primeval, but looking down into the road nearly fifty feet below, I realised that a

big stone flung by a good hefty fist from the top of that wall was a weapon by no means to be despised.

But walls, if often a protection, are sometimes a danger in more ways than in shutting out the fresh air. The summer rains in North China are heavy, and Fen Chou Fu holds water like a bucket. The only outlets are the narrow gateways, and the waters rise and rise. A short time before I came there all the eastern quarter of the town was flooded so deep that a woman was drowned. At last the waters escaped through the eastern gate, only to be banked up by the great ash-heaps, the product of centuries, the waste rubbish of the town, that are just outside the wall of the eastern suburb. It took a long, long while for those flood waters to percolate through the gateway of the suburb and find a resting-place at last in a swamp the other side of that long-suffering town. I must confess that this is one of the drawbacks to a walled town that has never before occurred to me, though to stand there and look at those great gates, those solid walls, made me feel as if I had somehow wandered into the fourth dimension, so out of my world were they.

There was a great fair in a Taoist temple and one day Mr Leete and I, with his teacher and my servant, attended. A wonderful thing is a Chinese fair in a temple. I do not yet understand the exact object of these fairs, though I have attended a good many of them. Whether they help the funds of the temple as a bazaar is supposed to help a church in this country, I cannot say. A temple in China usually consists of a set of buildings often in different courtyards behind one enclosing wall, and these buildings are not only temples to the gods, but living-rooms which are often let to suitable tenants, and, generally speaking, if the stranger knows his way about—I never did—he can get in a temple



WELLS IN FEN CHOU FU.

See page 58.



BRICKLAYER'S LABOURERS.

See page 59.



LITERARY TOWER ON WALL FEN CHOU FU.



RUINS OF THE YAMEN FEN CHOU FU.

See page 59.

accommodation for himself and his servants, far superior accommodation to that offered in the inns. It costs a little more, but everything is so cheap that makes no difference to the foreigner. The Taoist temple the day I went there was simply humming with life; there were stalls everywhere, and crowds of people buying, selling or merely gossiping and looking on. I took a picture of some ladies of easy virtue with gay dresses and gaily painted faces, tottering about, poor things, on their maimed feet, and at the same spot, close against the altar of the god, I took a picture of the priest. With much hesitation he consented to stand. He had in his hand some fortune-telling sticks, but did not dare hold them while his portrait was being taken. However, Mr Leete's teacher was a bold, brave, enlightened man—in a foreign helmet—and he held the sticks, and the two came out in the picture together. I trust no subsequent harm came to the daring man.

In Fen Chou Fu I could have walked about the town alone unmolested. I never did, because it would have been undignified and often awkward, as I could not speak the language, but the people were invariably friendly. On the whole, there was not very much to see. The sun poured down day after day in a cloudless sky, and the narrow streets, faced with stalls or blank grey brick walls enclosing the compounds, were dusty and uneven, with the ruts still there that had been made when the ground was softened by the summer rains of the year before. Away to the south-east was a great pagoda, the second tallest in China, a landmark that can be seen for many a long mile across the plain. This, like the phoenixes, is *feng shui*. I have never grasped the inwardness of pagodas, which are dotted in apparently a casual manner about the landscape. An immense amount of labour must have been expended upon them, and they do not appear to serve any useful purpose. This one at

Fen Chou Fu is meant to balance after a fashion the phoenixes on the northern wall and afford protection for the southern approach to the city. I don't know that it was used for any other purpose. It stood there, tall and commanding, dwarfing everything else within sight. Neither do I know the purpose of the literary tower which stands on the south-east corner of the wall. It denotes that the town either has or hopes to have a literary man of high standing among its inhabitants. But to look for the use in all things Chinese would be foolish ; much labour is expended on work that can be only for artistic purposes. To walk through a Chinese town, in spite of filth, in spite of neglect and disrepair, is to feel that the Chinaman is an artist to his finger-tips.

The gate to the American church in Fen Chou Fu, for instance, was a circle, a thing of strange beauty. Imagine such a gate in an English town, and yet here it seemed quite natural and very beautiful. They had no bell, why I do not know, perhaps because every temple in China has a plentitude of bells hanging from its eaves and making the air musical when the faintest breath of wind stirs and missionaries are anxious to dissociate themselves in every way from practices they call idolatry, even when those practices seem to an outsider like myself rather attractive. At any rate, to summon the faithful to church a man beats a gong.

But there is one institution of Fen Chou Fu which is decidedly utilitarian, and that is the wells in the north-western corner. A Chinaman, I should say, certainly uses on the average less water than the majority of humanity ; a bath when he is three days old, a bath when he is married, and after that he can comfortably last till he is dead, is the generally received idea of his ablutions, but he does want a little water to carry on life, and in this corner of the town are situated the wells which supply that necessary. It is rather brackish, but it is still drinkable, and it is all that

the city gets. They were a never-ending source of interest to me. They were established in those far-away days before history began—perhaps the presence of the water here was the reason for the building of the town—and they have been here ever since. The mouths are builded over with masonry, and year in and year out have come those self-same carts with solid wheels, drawn by a harnessed ox or an ox and a mule, bearing the barrels to be filled with water. Down through all the ages those self-same men, dressed in blue cotton that has worn to a dingy drab, with a wisp of like stuff tied round their heads to protect them from the dust or the cold or the sun, have driven those oxen and drawn that water. Really and truly our own water, that comes to us, hot and cold, so easily by the turning of a tap, is much more wonderful and interesting, but that I take as a matter of course, while I never tired of watching those prehistoric carts. It was in rather a desolate corner of the town too. The high walls rose up and frowned upon it, the inside of the walls where there was no brick, only crumbling clay with shrubs and creepers just bursting into leaf and little paths that a goat or an active boy might negotiate meandering up to the top. And to get to that part I had to pass the ruins of the old yamen razed to the ground when the Government repented them of the Boxer atrocities, and razed so effectually that only the two gate-posts, fashioned like lions, Chinese architectural lions, survive. A curse is on the place, the people say; anyhow when I visited it fourteen years later no effort had been made to rebuild. Not for want of labour, surely. There are no trade unions in China, and daily from dawn to dark in Fen Chou Fu I saw the bricklayers' labourers trotting along, bringing supplies to the men who were building, in the streets I met men carrying water to the houses in buckets, and now in the springtime there was a never-ending supply of small boys, clad in trousers

only, or without even those, bearing, slung from each end of a bamboo, supplies of firewood, or rather of such scraps as in any other land would have been counted scarce worth the cost of transport. Any day too I might expect to meet a coffin being borne along, not secretly and by night as we take one to a house, but proudly borne in the open daylight, for everyone knows a coffin is the most thoughtful and kindly as well as often the most expensive of gifts.

While here I attended a wedding. Twice have I attended a Chinese wedding. The first was at Pao Ting Fu at Christmas time, and the contracting parties were an evangelist of the church who in his lay capacity was a strapping big laundryman and one of the girls in Miss Newton's school. They had never spoken to one another, that would have been a frightful breach of decorum, but as they went to the same church, where there was no screen between the men and the women, as there is in many Chinese churches, it is possible they knew each other by sight. It is curious how in some things the missionaries conform to Chinese ideas and in others decline to yield an inch. In Pao Ting Fu no church member was allowed to smoke, but the women were kept carefully in retirement, and the schoolmistress, herself an unmarried woman, and the doctor's wife arranged marriages for such of the girls as came under their guardianship. Of course I see the reason for that: in the present state of Chinese society no other method would be possible, for these schoolgirls, all the more because they had a little scholarship and education, unless their future had been arranged for, would have been a temptation and a prey for all the young men around, and even with their careful education—and it was a careful education; Miss Newton was a woman in a thousand, I always grudged her to the Chinese—were entirely unfitted to take care of themselves.

Still it always made me smile to see these two women, middle-class Americans from Virginia, good-looking and kindly, with a keen sense of humour, gravely discussing the eligible young men around the mission and the girls who were most suitable for them. It was the most barefaced and open match-making I have ever seen. But generally, I believe, they were very successful, for this one thing is certain, they had the welfare of the girls at heart.

And this was one of the matches they had arranged. It is on record that on this special occasion the bridegroom, with the consent and connivance of the schoolmistress, had written to the bride exhorting her to diligence, and pointing out how good a thing it was that a woman should be well read and cultured. And seeing that she came of very poor people she might well be counted one of the fortunate ones of the earth, for the bridegroom was educating her. The ignorance of the average Chinese woman in far higher circles than she came of is appalling.

Christmas Day was chosen for the ceremony, and Christmas Day was a glorious winter's day, with golden sunshine for the bride, and the air, the keen, invigorating air of Northern China, was sparkling with frost. Now, in contrast to the next wedding I attended, this wedding was on so-called Western lines; but the Chinese is no slavish imitator, he changes, but he changes after his own fashion. The church was decorated by devout Chinese Christians with results which to Western eyes were a little weird and *outré*. Over the platform that in an Anglican church would be the altar was a bank of greenery, very pretty, with flowers dotted all over it, and on it Chinese characters in cotton wool, "Earth rejoices, heaven sings," and across that again was a festoon of small flags of all nations, while from side to side of the

church were slung garlands of gaily coloured paper in the five colours of the new republic, and when I think of the time and patience that went to the making of those garlands I was quite sorry they reminded me of fly-catchers. But the crowning decoration was the Chinese angel that hovered over all. This being was clad in white, a nurse's apron was used, girt in at the waist, foreign fashion, and I grieve to say they did not give her much breathing-space, though they tucked a pink flower in her belt. Great white paper wings were spread out behind, and from her head, framing the decidedly Mongolian countenance, were flowing golden curls, made by the ingenious decorators of singed cotton wool.

One o'clock was fixed for the wedding, and at a quarter to one the church was full.

They did not have the red chair for the bride. The consensus of opinion was against it. "It was given up now by the best people in Peking. They generally had carriages. And anyhow it was a ridiculous expense." So it was decided that the bride should walk. The church was only a stone's-throw from the schoolhouse where she lived. The bridegroom stood at the door on the men's side of the church, a tall, stalwart Chinaman, with his black hair sleek and oiled and cut short after the modern fashion. He was suitably clad in black silk. He reminded me of "William," a doll of my childhood who was dressed in the remains of an old silk umbrella—this is saying nothing against the bridegroom, for "William" was an eminently superior doll, and always looked his very best if a little smug occasionally. But if a gentleman who has attained to the proud position of laundryman and evangelist, and is marrying the girl he has himself at great expense educated for the position, has not a right to look a little smug, I don't know who has. Beside

him stood his special friend, the chief Chinese evangelist, who had himself been married four months before. At the organ sat the American doctor's pretty young wife, and as the word was passed, "The bride is coming!" she struck up the wedding march, and all the women's eyes turned to the women's door, while the men, who would not commit such a breach of decorum as to look, stared steadily ahead.

But the wedding march had been played over and over again before she did come, resplendent and veiled, after the foreign fashion, in white mosquito netting, with pink and blue flowers in her hair, and another bunch in her hand. The bridegroom had wished her to wear silk on this great occasion, so he had hired the clothes, a green silk skirt and a bronze satin brocade coat.

A model of Chinese decorum was that bride. Her head under the white veil was bent, her eyes were glued to the ground, and not a muscle of her body moved as she progressed very slowly forward. Presumably she did put one foot before the other, but she had the appearance of an automaton in the hands of the women on either side—her mother, a stooping little old woman, and a tall young woman in a bright blue brocade, the wife of the bridegroom's special friend. Each grasped her by an arm just above the elbow and apparently propelled her up the aisle as if she were on wheels. Up the opposite aisle came the bridegroom, also with his head bent and his eyes glued to the ground and propelled forward in the same manner by his friend.

They met, those two who had never met face to face before, before the minister, and he performed the short marriage ceremony, and as he said the closing words the Chinese evangelist became Master of Ceremonies.

"The bridegroom and bride," said he, "will bow to each other once in the new style."

The bride and groom standing before the minister bowed deeply to each other in the new style.

"They will bow a second time," and they bowed again.

"They will bow a third time," and once more they bowed low.

"They will now bow to the minister," and they turned like well-drilled soldiers and bowed to the white-haired man who had married them.

"They will now bow to the audience," and they faced the people and bowed deeply, and everybody in that congregation rose and returned the salutation.

"And now the audience will bow to the bride and bridegroom," and with right good will the congregation, Chinese and the two or three foreigners, rose and saluted the newly married couple, also I presume in the new style.

It was over, and to the strains of the wedding march they left the church, actually together, by way of the women's entrance. But the bride was not on the groom's arm. That would not have been in accord with Chinese ideas. The bridegroom marched a little ahead, propelled forward by his friend, as if he had no means of volition of his own—again I thought of "William," long since departed and forgotten till this moment—and behind came the new wife, thrust forward in the same manner, still with her eyes on the floor and every muscle stiff as if she too had been a doll.

"All the world loves a lover," but in China, the land of ceremonies, there are no lovers. This man had gone further than most men in the wooing of his wife, and they were beginning life together with very fair chances of success. But even so the girl might not hope for a home of her own.



BRINGING HOME A COFFIN.

See page 60.



ENGAGED TO BE MARRIED.

See page 72.



A PATIENT AT THE CLINIC.

See page 79.



AUTHOR'S CARAVAN PASSING WAYSIDE RESTAURANT IN
THE MOUNTAINS.

See page 97.

That would have been most unseemly. The evangelist laundryman had not a mother, but his only sister was taking the place of mother-in-law, and he and his bride would live with her and her husband.

The wedding I attended in Fen Chou Fu was quite a different affair. It was spring, or perhaps I should say early summer, the streets through which we drove to the old house of one of the Ming princes where dwelt the bridegroom with his mother were thick with dust, and the sun blazed down on us. The bridegroom belonged to a respectable well-to-do trading family, and he wanted a Christian wife because he himself is an active member of the church, but the Christian church at Fen Chou Fu has been bachelor so long, and the division between the sexes is so strait, that there are about fifty available girls to between eight and nine hundred young men, therefore he had to take what he could get, and what he could get was a pagan little girl about eighteen, for whom he paid thirty Mexican dollars, roughly a little under three pounds. I, a Greek, who do not care much what any man's religion is so long as he live a decent life, understand the desire of that man for a Christian wife, for that means here in the interior that she will have received a little education, will be able to read and write and do arithmetic, and will know something of cleanliness and hygiene.

The great day arrived, and the missionaries and I were invited to the bridegroom's house for the ceremony and the feast that was to follow. The entertainment began about eight o'clock in the morning, but we arrived a little after noon, and we two women, Miss Grace Maccomaughy and I, were ushered through the courtyards till we came to the interior one, which was crowded with all manner of folks, some in festive array, some servants in the ordinary blue

of the country, and some beggars in rags who were anticipating the scraps that fall from the rich man's table, and were having tea and cake already. Overhead the sky was shut out by all manner of flags and banners with inscriptions in Chinese characters upon them, and once inside, we made our way towards the house through a pressing crowd. Opposite the place that perhaps answered for a front door was a table draped in red, the colour of joy, and on the table were two long square candles of red wax with Chinese characters in gold upon them. They were warranted to burn a day and a night, and between them was a pretty dwarf plant quaintly gnarled and bearing innumerable white flowers. That table was artistic and pretty, but to its left was a great pile of coal, and, beside the coal, a stove and a long table at which a man, blue-clad, shaven and with a queue, was busy preparing the feast within sight of all. I could have wished the signs of hospitality had not been so much in evidence, for I could quite believe that cook had not been washed since he was three days old, and under the table was a large earthenware bowl full of extremely dirty water in which were being washed the bowls we would presently use.

Out came the women of the household to greet us and conduct us to the bridal chamber, dark and draped with red and without any air to speak of. It was crowded to suffocation with women in gala costumes, with bands of black satin embroidered in flowers upon their heads, gay coats and loose trousers, smiling faces and the tiny feet of all Shansi. It was quite a relief to sit down on the *k'ang* opposite to a stout and cheerful old lady with a beaming face who looked like a well-to-do farmer's wife. She was a childless widow, however, but she had attained to the proud position of Bible-woman, receiving a salary of four Mexican

dollars a month, and consequently had a position and station of her own. In my experience there is nothing like being sure of one's own importance in the world. It is certainly conducive to happiness. I know the missionaries, bless them! would say I am taking a wrong view, but whatever the reason at the back of it all, to them is the honour of that happy, comfortable-looking Bible-woman. And there are so few happy-looking women in China!

We sat on the *k'ang* and waited for the bride, and we discoursed. My feet—I never can tuck them under me—clad in good substantial leather, looked very large beside the tiny ones around me, for even the Bible-woman's had been bound in her youth, and of course, though they were unbound now, the broken bones could never come straight, and the flesh could not grow between the heel and the toes. She looked at my feet and I laughed, and she said sententiously, like a true Chinese:

“The larger the feet the happier the woman.”

I asked did it hurt when hers were bound.

“It hurt like anything,” translated the missionary girl beside me, “but it is all right now.”

The bride was long in coming, and shortly after four we heard the gongs and music and crackers that heralded her arrival, and we all went out to greet her, or rather to stare at her. First came the bridegroom, and that well-to-do tradesman was a sight worth coming out to see. He wore a most respectable black satin jacket and a very pretty blue silk petticoat; round his neck and crossed on his breast was a sash of orange-red silk, set off with a flaring magenta artificial chrysanthemum of no mean proportions, and on his head, and somewhat too small for him, was—a rare headgear in China—a hard black felt hat. From the brim of that, on either side, rose a wire archway across the crown, on which

were strung ornaments of brass, and I am bound to say that the whole effect was striking.

Before the bride came in to be married, out went two women to lift her veil and smear her face with onion. They explained that the bridegroom's mother should do this, but the fortune-teller had informed them that these two women would be antagonistic—which I think I could have foretold without the aid of any fortune-teller—therefore the rite was deputed to two other women, one of whom was the kindergarten teacher at the school. Then, with the teacher on one side and a lucky woman with husband and children living on the other, down through the crowd came the little bride to her marriage. She was clad in a red robe, much embroidered, which entirely hid her figure, so that whether she were fat or slim it was impossible to see, on her head was a brazen crown entirely covering it, and over her face was a veil of thick bright red silk. She could neither see nor be seen. Her feet were the tiniest I have ever seen, they looked about suitable for a baby of twelve months old. The tiny red shoes were decorated with little green tassels at the pointed toe and had little baby high heels, and though they say these feet were probably false, the real ones must have been wonderfully small if they were hidden in the manifold red bandages that purported to make the slender red ankles neat.

Bride and bridegroom took their places in front of the minister, in front of the plant and alongside the coals, and it made my back ache to think of keeping any being standing for above a second on such feet. The service began, all in Chinese, of course, though the officiating minister was an American, a couple of hymns were sung, and the audience laughed aloud because she was married by her baby name, her mother having omitted to provide her with another.

The good woman had yearned for a son so she had called this girl "Lead a brother."

Half-way through the ceremony the bridegroom lifted the veil. He gave it a hurried snatch, as if it were a matter of no moment, and hung it on one of the projections of the brazen crown, and then he and we saw the bride's face for the first time. They had done their best to spoil her beauty with earmine paint, but she had a nice little nose and a sweet little quivering mouth that was very lovable, and I think the bridegroom, though he never moved a muscle, must have been pleased with his bargain.

When the service was ended, she and we, the principal guests, went back to the *k'ang* in the bride chamber; her crown and outer red robe were taken off, all in public, and a small square box containing some of her trousseau was brought in, and every woman and child there in that stuffy little room dived into it and hauled out the silks and embroideries and little shoes and made audible comments on them.

"H'm! it's only sham silk," said one.

"How old are you, new bride?" asked another.

"She's not much to look at," said a third, which was a shame, for with the paint washed off she must have been pretty though tired-looking.

It was five o'clock before we went to the feast, all the women together, and all the men together, four or five at a table, and the bridegroom, without the absurd headgear, and his mother, in sober blue silk, came round at intervals and exhorted us to eat plenty.

We had one little saucer each, a pair of chopsticks and a china spoon such as that with which my grandmother used to ladle out her tea, and they served for all the courses. It was lucky I had had nothing since seven in the morning,

or I might not have felt equal to eating after I had seen the cooking and the washing-up arrangements. As it was, I was hungry enough not to worry over trifles. After she had sucked them audibly, my friend the Bible-woman helped me with her own chopsticks, and I managed to put up with that too. I tried a little wine. It was served in little bowls not as large as a very small salt-cellar, literally in thimblefuls, but one was too much for me. It tasted of fiery spirit and earth, and I felt my companion was not denying herself much when she proclaimed herself a teetotaler. What we ate heaven only knows, but much to my surprise I found it very good. Chinese when they have the opportunity are excellent cooks.

The bride sat throughout the feast on the *k'ang*, her hands—three of her finger-nails were shielded with long silver shields—hidden under her lavender jacket and her plate piled before her, though etiquette required that she should refuse all food. They chaffed her and laughed at her, but she sat there with downcast eyes like a graven image. After the feast two or three men friends of the bridegroom were brought in, and to every one she had to rise and make an obeisance, and though the men and women hardly looked at or spoke to each other, it was evident that she was for this occasion a thing to be commented on, inspected and laughed at. She was bearing it very well, poor little girl, when Kan T'ai T'ai's cart—I was Kan T'ai T'ai—was announced, and we went home through the streets as the shades of evening were falling. I had fed bountifully and well, but the dissipation had worn me out, the airlessness of the rooms was terrible, and even the dust-laden air of the narrow street I drew into my lungs with a sigh of deep thankfulness. It was good to be in the free air again. Better still to remember, however I had railed against my

fate at times, nothing that could ever happen to me would be quite as bad as the fate of the average Chinese woman.

However, a new life was beginning for this girl in more ways than one. The bridegroom was going back to his business, that of a photographer in T'ai Yuan Fu, leaving his wife with his mother. She was to be sent to the school for married women opened by the missionaries, and, of course, her feet were to be unbound. Probably, I hope I do not do him an injustice, the bridegroom would not have objected to bound feet, but he did want an educated mother for his children, and the missionaries will take no woman with bound feet. They will do the best they can to retrieve the damage done, though she can never hope to be anything but a maimed cripple, but at least she in the future will be free from pain, into her darkened life will come a little knowledge and a little light, and certainly her daughters will have a happier life and a brighter outlook.

Missions in China, if they are to do any good, are necessarily patriarchal. They look after their converts from the cradle to the grave. The kindergarten run by a Chinese girl under the maternal eye of young Miss Grace Maccomaughey was quite a pretty sight, with all the little tots in their quaint dresses of many colours and their hair done or their heads shaved in the absurd fashion which seems good to the proud Chinese parents—for Chinese parents are both proud and tender and loving, though their ways seem strange to us. But babies all the world over, yellow or black or white, are all lovable, and these babies at the kindergarten were delicious.

"Beloved guest, beloved guest," they sang in chorus when I came in and they were told to greet me. "Peace to thee, peace to thee."

And "Lao T'ai T'ai" they used to address me in shrill little voices as I went about the compound. Lao T'ai T'ai

(I shouldn't like to swear I'd spelled it properly) means "Old lady"—that is, a woman of venerable years who is rich enough to keep a servant—and it was the first time in my life I had been so addressed, so I looked in the glass to see if I had developed grey hair or wrinkles—riding on a mule-pack would be enough to excuse anything—and then I remembered that if in doubt in China it is erring on the side of courtesy to consider your acquaintance old. I dare say to the children I was old. I remember as a very little girl a maiden aunt asking me how old I thought her, and I, knowing she was older than my mother, felt she must be quite tottery and suggested in all good faith she might be about ninety. I believe the lady had just attained her five and thirtieth year, and prided herself upon her youthful appearance. At anyrate her attitude on this occasion taught me when guessing an age it is better to understate than to overestimate. At least in the West. Here in the East I was "Old lady" by courtesy.

And they begin the important things of life early in China. At the kindergarten there were two little tots, a boy and a girl, engaged to be married. The boy was the son of one of the mission cooks and the girl was the daughter of his wife. He, a widower, sought a wife to look after his little boy, and he got this young widow cheap. Her price was thirty *tiaous*—that is, a little over one pound—and at first he said it was too much and he could not afford it, but when he heard she had a little girl he changed his mind and scraped together the money, for the child could be betrothed to his little son and save the expense of a wife later on.

They were a quaint little pair, both in coats and trousers, shabby and old, evidently the children of poor people, and both with their heads shaven save for a tuft of hair here and there. The boy had his tufts cut short, while the girl's

were allowed to grow as long as they would and were twisted into a plait. Such a happy little couple they were, always together, and in the games at the kindergarten when they had to pair these little ones always chose each other. Possibly the new wife in the home was a wise and discreet woman. She might be glad too at the thought that she need not part with her daughter. Anyhow I should think that in Fen Chou Fu in the future there would be one married couple between whom the sincerest affection will exist.

I suppose Chinese husbands and wives are fond of each other occasionally, but the Chinaman looks upon wedded life from quite a different point of view from the Westerner. I remember hearing about a new-made widow who came to sympathise with a missionary recovering from a long illness. She was properly thanked, and then the missionary in her turn said in the vernacular :

“ And you too have suffered a bitterness. I am sorry.”

“ I ? ” incredulously, as much as to say, Who could think I had a sorrow ?

“ Why, yes. You have lost your husband, haven't you ? ”

“ Call that a bitterness ? ” smiled the relict cheerfully, and her would-be consoler felt the ground cut away beneath her feet.

But perhaps that sympathiser was not quite as much dismayed as another lady who offered her condolences upon a similar occasion. The new-made widow was a gay old thing, and she remarked blandly, with a toss of her head :

“ Ah, we don't worry about things like that when we've got the Gospel ! ” which left that well-meaning teacher a little uncertain as to whether she had instructed her in the doctrines of her new faith quite correctly.

Fen Chou Fu is a town that lends itself to reform, that asks for it. When I was there they had a magistrate who

had been educated in Japan and was ready to back any measures for the good of the town. He was too much imbued with the spirit of modern thought to be a Christian, but he was full of admiration for many of the measures advocated by these enthusiastic young people from Oberlin College. There is a large Government school here—you may see the courtyards with their lily ponds and bridges from the wall—that has been in existence for hundreds of years, and this magistrate appealed to the missionaries to take it over and institute their modern methods. They might even, so he said, teach their own faith there. The only thing that stood in the way was want of funds, for though the school was endowed, money has still a way of sticking to the hands through which it passes in China. The missionaries were rather inclined, I think, to have hopes of his conversion, but I do not think it is very easy to convert the broad-minded man who sees the good in all creeds. This magistrate was anxious to help his people sunk in ignorance and was wise enough to use every means that came in his way, for he knows, knowing his own people, you will never Westernise a Chinaman. He will take all that is good—or bad—in the West that appeals to him, and he will mould it in his own way. This magistrate was building an industrial school for criminal boys close to the mission station and, more progressive than the West itself, he allowed his wife to sit on the bench beside him and try and sentence women proved guilty of crime.

CHAPTER V

“ MISERERE DOMINE ! ”

As I have said more than once, it seems to me the most intolerable thing in life would be to be a Chinese woman. I remember when first I began to write about China I asked a friend of mine to look over my work and he objected to my making such a fuss about the condition of the women.

“ Why, people will think you are a suffragette ! ” said he, searching for some term of obloquy that he felt could not possibly apply to me.

But I am a suffragist, an ardent suffragist, realising that a woman is most valuable neither as an angel nor as a slave, but as a useful citizen, and I saw then that he possibly knew little about the condition of his own women, and probably absolutely nothing at all about the condition of the women of the race who swarmed around him. Those he met would be dumb, and at any rate no right-minded woman begins upon her wrongs to a stranger. In any country it would be bad taste, in China no words can tell what shocking bad taste. I had to seek further afield for my information, and I got it from the medical missions. Now I went to China with a strong prejudice against missionaries, and I found there many people who backed me up. And then it occurred to me that I had better go to a mission station and see what manner of people were these I was judging so hastily and so finally.

I went. And what I saw made me sorry that Great Britain and America, to say nothing of Scandinavia, should

be deprived of the services of these men and women who are giving so much to an alien people. Of course I know that many missionaries have the "call," a "vocation" I suppose the Catholics would call it.

"It is a fine work," said I, usually the unadmiring, "to teach these women, but I do not like coming in contact with them, however much I appreciate their virtues."

And the missionary girl looked at me pityingly.

"Do you think," said she, "we could come all this way to teach Chinese women reading, writing and arithmetic?"

It seems to me a great thing to do; if it be only to teach them to wash, it is a great thing; but I who merely pitied would never have stayed there to better the condition of those unhappy women. To her and her comrades had come that mysterious call that comes to all peoples through all the ages, the Crying in the Wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Make His paths straight," and she thought more, far more, of it than I did of the undoubtedly good work I saw she was doing, saw as I never should have seen had I not gone in the ways untrodden by the tourist, or indeed by any white man.

There are missionaries and missionaries, of course; there are even backsliders who, having learned the difficult tongue under the ægis of the missions, have taken up curio-buying or any other of the mercantile careers that loom so temptingly before the man who knows China; but in all classes of society there are backsliders, the great majority must not be judged by them. Neither must their narrowness be laid too much to heart when judging the missionary as a whole. Possibly only a fanatic can carry through whole-heartedly the work of a missionary at a remote station in China, and most fanatics are narrow. There are, too, the men and women who make it a business and a livelihood, who reckon they

have house and income and position and servants in return for their services to the heathen, but they too are faithful and carry out their contracts. Having once seen the misery and poverty in which the great majority of Chinese dwell, I can say honestly that I think every mission station that I have seen is a centre from which radiates at least a hope of better things. They raise the standard of living, and though I care not what god a man worships, and cannot understand how any man can be brought to care, it is good that to these people sitting in darkness someone should point out that behind the world lies a great Force, God, Love, call it what you will, that is working for good. That the more educated Chinese has worked out a faith for himself, just as many in the West have done, I grant you, but still the majority of the people that I have seen sit in darkness and want help. From the missions they get it. Taken by and large, the Chinaman is a utilitarian person, and if the missions had not been helpful they would long ago have gone. And for the missionaries themselves—I speak of those in the outstations—not one, it seems to me, not one would stay among the Chinese unless he were sure that his God had sent him, for the life is hard, even for the rich missions there are many deprivations, and if therefore, being but human, they sometimes depict their God as merciful and loving in a way that seems small and petty, much must be forgiven them. They are doing their best.

There is another side to it too for the West. These missionaries are conquering China by the system of peaceful penetration. They are persecuted, they suffer, are murdered often, but that does not drive them away. They come back again and again, and wherever the missionary succeeds in planting his foot the hatred to foreigners and things foreign, strong among the conservative Chinese, is weakened

and finally broken down. China is a rich country, she is invaluable to the nations of the earth for purposes of trade, and though the missionary in many ways, if he were asked, would oppose the coming of the white man, he certainly is the pioneer.

China is trying to reform herself, but the process is slow, and it seems to me in Shansi and in the parts of Chihli that I know it would be a long, long while before the good percolated to the proletariat, the Babylonish slaves, if it were not for the missionaries; and particularly do I admire the medical missionaries, for China is one huge sore.

That is the word the woman doctor at Pao Ting Fu applied to it, and, attending her clinic of a morning, I was inclined to agree with her. Life is hard for everybody among the poor in China, but especially does it press upon the women. They came there into the clean sun-lit room and the reek of them went up to heaven—bald-headed, toothless old crones in wadded coats out of which all semblance of colour had long since passed, young girls and little children clad in the oldest of garments. There were so many with ingrowing eyelashes that the doctor had one particular day upon which she operated for this painful disfigurement, and she showed me how, by making a little nick—I'm afraid I can't use proper surgical terms—in the upper eyelid, she turned back the eyelashes and made them grow in the direction they are intended to grow, and saved the unfortunates' eyes. Why eyelashes should grow in in China I don't know. Perhaps it is my ignorance, but I have never heard of their behaving in such an unnatural fashion in any other part of the world, while in Pao Ting Fu this ailment seemed to be as common as influenza in London. Then there would be women with their mouths closed by sores, often so badly they could only live by suction, and more than once a new mouth had

to be cut ; there were cancerous growths—the woman depicted in the picture had waited twenty years before she could arrange to come under one hundred miles to the doctor—there were sores on the head, sores all over the body, all, I suppose, including the ingrowing eyelashes, caused by malnutrition, swollen glands, abscesses offensive and purulent, in fact in that clinic were collected such an array of human woes, ghastly, horrible, as well might make one wonder if the force behind all life could possibly be anything but devilish and cruel. Wherein could the good be found ? Where ?

And yet there was good. Among these women moved the nurses. They were comely girls in blue coats and trousers, with their abundant black hair smoothly drawn back, neat white stockings and the daintiest of little shoes. Their delicate artistic hands used sponge and basin very capably, they were the greatest contrast to their patients, and yet they were truly Chinese, had sprung from the people to whom they now ministered, and one of them, though it was hardly observable, had an artificial foot. So had she suffered from foot-binding that her own had had to be amputated.

Probably most of the ailments there treated were preventable, but worst of all were the bound feet and the ailments the women suffered from in consequence. It is not good manners to speak about a woman's feet, and the women themselves rarely refer to them, but naturally I was interested in the custom, and whenever the doctor got a “ good ” bound foot, which probably meant a very bad one, she sent over for me to come and see it. Anyone who has once seen a bound foot will never forget it. It always smelt abominably when first the bandages were taken off, and the first thing the nurses did was to provide a square kerosene tin of hot water in which to soak the foot well.

Well washed, the feet might be looked at. Shansi especially is the home of the bound foot, most of the women have such small feet that they are confined for the greater part of their lives to the *k'ang*. I remember Dr Lewis in all seriousness saying that he thought on the whole a Chinese woman was better without her feet. And I'm inclined to think he was right. The toes, all except the big toe, are pressed back till they touch the heel, the bandage is put on and drawn tighter and tighter every day, and if the girl is healthy and big-boned, so much the worse for her. No matter the size of the girl, the foot must conform to the one standard. In Shansi when I was there the shoes were generally about four inches long, and I have taken shoes of that length off a tall and strapping woman who was tottering along with the aid of a stick. What she must have suffered to get her feet to that size is too terrible to imagine. She must have been suffering still for that matter. If the instep after the tightest binding still sticks up the girl's marriage chances are seriously interfered with, and then the mother or some feminine relative takes a meat-chopper and breaks the bone till she can bind the foot small enough. This information I got from the American lady who looks after the women in the mission in Fen Chou Fu; and at T'ai Yuan Fu the sister in the women's hospital added the gruesome detail that they sometimes pull off the little girls' toe-nails so that they may not interfere with the binding!

And at the women's hospital at Pao Ting Fu I saw the finished product. The big toe stuck straight out, red, possibly because of the soaking in hot water—I never had courage to look at one unsoaked—and ghastly-looking, the other toes were pressed back against the heel and the heel went up and was exactly like the Cuban heels affected by smartly dressed women, only this time it had been worked in



A WAYSIDE REFRESHMENT BOOTH IN THE LOESS COUNTRY.



INN YARD.

See page 99.



WU CH'ENG, A VILLAGE OF YAOS.

See page 99.



OUTSIDE A CAMEL INN.

See page 101.

flesh and blood. The whole limb from the big toe to the knee was hard and immovable as stone. If you press ordinary flesh anywhere it pits, just yields a little, not so a Chinese woman's leg and foot. It is thin, perished, literally hard as marble. Once having seen a foot unbound, it is a wonder to me that any woman should walk at all. And yet they do. They hold out their arms and walk, balancing themselves, and they use a stick. Sometimes they walk on their heels, sometimes they try the toe, but once I realised what those bandages concealed it was a painful and dreadful thing to me to see a Chinese woman walking. In spite of the hardness of the flesh, or probably because of it, they get bad corns on the spot upon which they balance, and sores, very often tuberculous, eat into the foot.

But the evil does not stop at the foot. In Shansi it seemed to me every woman's face was marked with the marks of patient suffering. Travelling I often got a glimpse of one peering out of a cart or litter at the foreigner, and that face invariably was patient, pallid and worn, for foot-binding brings no end of evils in its train. The doctor at Fen Chou Fu declared that nine-tenths of the women who came to him for treatment suffered from tuberculosis in some form or another, and this in a climate that in the winter must out-rival in dryness Davos Platts. Not a few, too, develop spinal curvature low down in the back, and often because of the displacement of the organs they die in child-birth. A missionary in one of the little towns I passed through, a trained nurse, told me that when a woman suffered from what she (the woman) called leg-waist pains—the doctor called it osteomalacia—her case was hopeless, she could not give birth to a child. Often this nurse had been called in to such cases, and she could do nothing to help the suffering girl. She could only stand by and see her die. I could well

believe these tales of suffering. In Fen Chou Fu and in Pao Ting Fu the women of the poorer classes freely walked the streets, and their crippled condition was patent to all eyes. But in some towns it is not considered seemly for any woman to be seen in the streets. Some reason established this custom long ago: the reason passes, but China is the most conservative of nations, and the custom remains. But the reason for foot-binding is not very clear. There is something sexual at the bottom of it, I believe, but why a sick and ailing woman should be supposed to welcome the embraces of her lord more readily than one abounding in health passes my understanding. Of course we remember that not so very long ago, in the reign of Victoria, practically the delicate woman who was always ailing was held up to universal admiration. Look at the swooning heroines of Dickens and Thackeray. But let no man put the compressed waist on the same plane as foot-binding. I have heard more than one man do so, but I unhesitatingly affirm they are wrong. Foot-binding is infinitely the worse crime. The pinched-in waist did not begin till the girl was at least well on in her teens, and it was only the extreme cases—and they did it of their own free will I presume—who kept up the pressure always. There was always the night for rest, whereas the Chinese women get no rest from torture.

The missionaries at Fen Chou Fu, being very anxious to improve the status of the women, used to arrange to have lectures in their large hall to women only, and they raked the country-side for important people to address them on subjects that were, or rather that should be, of interest to women. They were not supposed to have anything to do with religion, but they discussed openly women's position, were told about hygiene and the care of children, and the magistrate's wife, she who had been

educated in Japan, told them some home-truths about the position of women in China.

“ American women,” said she on one occasion, “ go out into the world and help in the world’s development. We Chinese stay at home and are dragged along by the men. The time has come when we must learn better things.”

But I looked one day at over seventy women of the richer classes assembled to listen to a young and enthusiastic Chinese with modern views on the position of women and their equality with men. He was passionate, he was eloquent, he was desperately in earnest, but it was very evident he spoke to deaf ears. I do not think that any one of those women grasped, or cared for that matter, what he was saying. In the heart of China woman is very far from being the equal of man. These women were pets and toys, and they came to the mission station probably because it was the fashionable form of amusement just then, but they listened to what was being said with deaf ears and minds incapable of understanding. They were gaily clad in silks and satins, richly embroidered ; their hair when it was abundant was oiled and elaborately dressed and decorated with gold and silver pins, and when it was scanty was hidden under embroidered silken bands ; there was not a skirt amongst them, that was left to the lecturer, their blue and green and brilliant red trousers were rather narrow, their feet were of the very tiniest even in Shansi, and their faces, worn and suffering under their paint and powder, were vacant. Some of them had brought their babies, and only when a child cried, and they cried fairly frequently, did those faces light up. That was something they really did understand.

And yet that enthusiastic young scholar in his voluminous petticoats, with his hair cut in the modern fashion, went

on lecturing to them on the rights of women, the position women ought to occupy!

But the position of women! Toys or slaves are they, toys and slaves have been their mothers and their grandmothers since the days before the dawn of history, and very, very slowly is the idea of the possibility of better things percolating through to the masses in China. It will come, I suppose, because already there are Government schools for women, though they are few and far between, and in some places, so far has the desire for freedom gone, the girls have banded themselves into societies, declaring that rather than marry a man they have never seen they will commit suicide, and more than one has taken her own life. But in the parts of Shansi and Chihli where I was so much light has not yet penetrated. The wife and mother has influence because any living thing with which we are closely associated—even if it be but a little dog—must needs influence us, but all the same the Chinese women are as a rule mere chattels, dependent entirely upon their menfolk. Amongst the Chinese the five happinesses are: old age, a son, riches, official position and a moustache; so slight a thing is a woman that she does not come in in this connection.

"As far as the heavens are above the earth, so far am I," disdainfully proclaimed a Chinese teacher, "above my wife." And he only spoke as if stating a self-evident fact, a thing that could not be questioned. "How could she be my equal?" Just as I might have objected to being put on the same plane as my mule or my little dog. Indeed I doubt very much whether he gave the same consideration to his wife as I would do to my little dog, who is much beloved.

This is not to say, of course, that the men don't consider the women. They do.

I remember the gate-keeper at Pao Ting Fu mission paying

up for his daughter's schooling. He was a jovial old soul, so old that I was surprised to hear he had a mother.

“ Short am I ? ” said he cheerfully. “ Short ? Oh, that dollar and a half ! ” He paused to consider the matter, then added : “ And I was thinking about borrowing a dollar from you. My mother's dying, and I want to buy her a skirt ! Must be prepared, you know ! ”

The old lady, said Miss Newton, had probably never owned such a luxury as a skirt in her life, but that was her son's way of being good to her, for the people have a proverb to the effect that the most important thing in life is to be buried well, an idea that isn't entirely unknown in Western and more enlightened lands. Poor old lady, whose one and only skirt came to her to be buried in, or perhaps it would be taken off before she was buried, for the Chinese are a careful people. I remember one frugal man who celebrated the funeral of his mother and the marriage of his son at the same time, so that the funeral baked meats did for the marriage feast, and the same musicians did for both. The coffin, of heavy black wood, tall as a mantelpiece, stood in the yard, with the eldest son and his wife clad in white as mourners, and the rest of the company made merry in the house over the bridal. It was the most exquisite piece of thrift, but the Chinaman is *par excellence* an economist.

It was in Pao Ting Fu that I met the only woman who made open complaint against the position of women, and she only did it because, poor thing, she was driven to it.

She slipped through the mission compound gate while the gate-keeper was looking the other way, a miserable, unkempt woman with roughened hair and maimed feet. Her coat and trousers of the poorest blue cotton were old and soiled, and the child she carried in her arms was naked save for a little square of blue cotton tied round his body

in front. She was simply a woman of the people, deadly poor where all just escape starvation, young and comely where many are unattractive, and she stood under the shade of the trees watching eagerly the mission family and their guest at breakfast on the porch! It was a June morning, the sunshine that would be too fierce later on now at 7 A.M. was golden, and a gentle breeze just whispered softly in the branches that China—even Pao Ting Fu—in the early summer morning was a delightful place.

But eager watching eyes glued to every mouthful are distinctly disquieting, and in China, the land of punctilious etiquette, are rude. Besides, she had no business to be there, and the doctor's wife turned and spoke to her.

"What custom is this?" said she, using the vernacular, "and how did you get in here?"

"I ran past"—ran, save the mark, with those poor broken cramped feet—"when the gate-keeper was not looking. And it's not a day's hunger I have. For weeks when we have had a meal we have not known where the next was coming from."

"But you have a husband?"

"And he was rich," assented the woman, "but he has gambled it all away."

It was quite a likely story. Another woman working on the compound said it was true. She had a bad husband—*hi yah!* a very bad husband. He beat her, often he beat her. Sometimes perhaps it was her fault, because she was bad-tempered. Who would not be bad-tempered with maimed feet, an empty stomach and two little hungry children? But often he beat her for no reason at all. And everyone knows that a Chinese husband has a perfect right to beat his wife. That he refrains from so doing is an act of grace on his part, but a woman of herself is merely his chattel. She has no rights.

The hospital quilted bed-covers—*pei wos*, they called them—had to be unripped and washed. The pay was twenty-five *t'ung tzus* a day and keep yourself. One hundred and thirty *t'ung tzus* went to the dollar, and 10·35 dollars went to the sovereign at that time, so that the work could not be considered overpaid; but this was China, and the women were apparently rising up out of the ground and clamouring for it. It was evidently looked upon as quite a recreation to sit under the trees on the grass in the mission compound and gossip and unpick quilts. The new recruit joined them and spent a happy day, sure of food for herself and her children for that day at least—not food perhaps such as we would appreciate, but at least a sufficiency of millet porridge.

That day and the next she worked, and then on the third day at midday she went away for her meal and did not come back till after two o'clock in the afternoon. The doctor's wife was reproachful.

“ You have been away for over three hours. Why is this ? ”

She was a true Chinese and found it difficult to give a direct answer.

“ I have been talking to my mother,” said she, rousing wrath where she might have gained sympathy.

“ What excuse is this ? ” said the doctor's wife. “ You go away, and when I ask you why, you tell me you have been talking to your mother ! Your mother should have more sense than to keep you from your work ! ”

“ But my husband has sold me ! ” protested the culprit, and then we saw that her face was swollen with crying ; “ and I am a young woman and I don't know what to do when my husband sells me. He keeps the children and he sells me, and Tsao, the man who has bought me, is a bad

man," and dropping down to the ground she let the tears fall on to the work in her hands.

"I am young and so I don't know what to do." It was the burden of her song. It may be she is wailing still, for the story was unfinished when I left. She was young and she didn't know what to do. She would not have minded leaving her husband if only the man to whom she had been sold had been a better man, but he bore a worse reputation if anything than her husband, and ignorant, unlearned in all things of this world as she was, she and the women round her knew exactly what her fate would be. Tsao would sell her when he tired of her, and her next purchaser would do likewise, and as she gets older and her white teeth decay and her bright eyes fade and her comeliness wanes her money value will grow less and less, and beating and starvation will be her portion till death comes as a merciful release. But, as she kept repeating pathetically, she is young, and death is the goal at the end of a weary, weary, heart-breaking road.

For her husband was quite within his rights. He could sell her. It may be, of course, he will be swayed by public opinion, and public opinion is against the disposing of a wife after this fashion.

"Let her complain to the official," suggested my assurance.

But the wise women who knew rose up in horror at the depths of ignorance I was disclosing.

"Go to the yamen and complain of her husband!"

It is no crime for a man to sell his wife, but it is a deadly crime for a woman to speak evil of her husband! She was not yet handed over. All he would have to do would be to deny it, and then she would be convicted of this crime and to her other ills would be added the wrath of the official. No, something better than that must be thought of.

She had been sold for a hundred *tiaou*—something under four pounds—and when the money was paid she would have to go to her new master, far away from all her friends.

“*Hi yah!*” said the other women. “What a bad man !” So public opinion was against it !

It would do no good to buy her freedom unless the purchaser were prepared to take upon himself the conduct of her future life. A woman must belong to somebody in China ; she is, except in very exceptional cases and among the very advanced, considered incapable of guiding her own life, and pay this and the man would still regard her as his wife and sell her again.

Then a woman wise with wisdom of the people arose.

“There is only one thing to be done,” said she ; “you must pretend you know nothing about it, and when Tsao comes, and you are sold, then make an excuse and run to the yamen. It may be the official will help, for it is a wicked thing.”

“Run to the yamen !” on feet on which she could just totter. But the wise woman had taken that into consideration.

“Mark well the way so you may hide in the turnings.”

Such a forlorn, pitiful little hope ! But with it she had to be content, and that night she held her peace and pretended she did not know the fate that hung over her, and when I left she was still ripping bed-covers with the other women. She had had no hand in bringing about her own fate, for she did not choose this man. She had never seen him till she was handed over on her marriage day by her parents.

“What,” said the women at one place when a new missionary came to them, “forty and not married ! What freedom ! How did you manage it ! What good fortune !”

In China there is no respectable word, so I am told, to denote a bachelor, and there was almost never, at least under the old regime, such a thing as an old maid. Every woman must belong to someone, and few and far between are the families that can afford to keep unmarried daughters, so the women regard as eminently fortunate those foreign women they come across, missionary or otherwise, who are apparently free to guide their own lives.

Of course the average husband would no more think of selling his wife than would an Englishman, but, unlike the Englishman, he knows that he has the right to do so should he so please, even as he has the right of life and death over her and his children. She is his chattel, to be faithful to her would simply be foolishness.

They tell a story of an angry father found digging a hole in which he proposed to bury his son alive. That son had been insolent, and it was a terrible thing to have an insolent son. His mother wept, but to her tears the father paid no heed. A stranger passed along and questioned the little company, and finding in his heart pity for the woman and the lad, cast about how he might help them. He did not set about it as we of the West would have done.

He commiserated with the father. It was a terrible thing to have an insolent son. Undoubtedly he deserved death. But it would be a bad thing to have no son to worship at the ancestral tablet.

That was provided for, said the irate parent. He had two other sons.

That was well ! That was well ! And of course they had sons ?

No, they were young. They had no sons yet.

A-a-ah ! And suppose anything happened by which they both should die ?

The stranger let that sink in. He had struck the right chord. It would be a terrible thing to have no son to worship at the ancestral tablet—to think that he by his own act——

Chinese reasoning prevailed, and the son's life was spared.

And yet the Chinese are fond of their children and, according to their lights, good to their wives. It is that under the patriarchal system children and women—a woman is always a child, a very ignorant child as a rule—have no rights. They are dependent upon the good will of their owners.

And so the woman sitting waiting to see if her husband would complete the bargain and sell her had no rights. She was just a chattel in the eye of the law. And there was none to help. *Miserere Domine !* It was just possible public opinion would save her. It was her only hope. *Miserere Domine ! Miserere Domine !*

In Fen Chou Fu the missionaries had started an adult school for women. First it was started, as they themselves put it, to teach the Gospel, but then wisely they extended it and taught reading, writing and arithmetic, and very eager indeed were the pupils. It is only fair to say that very often husbands, or possibly fathers-in-law—for a woman belongs to the head of her husband's family, or at least owes allegiance to him—aided and abetted in every way, and when necessary sent the pupils twenty and thirty miles in carts and in litters from away in the mountains to attend. One woman with four little children, all under five, with another coming, was a most eager pupil. Her children were sent to the kindergarten, which is in charge of a young Chinese teacher educated by the missionaries.

Again I do not say the Chinese are not doing something to ameliorate the condition of their women. I can only speak of what I saw, and what I saw was, here in Shansi, the

wives of the most miserable peasants sunk in ignorance and hardly able to crawl from the *k'angs* on which they spent their lives. The men do the cooking because the women are incapable, and the mortality among the children is terrible. A doctor told me that very often he had attended a woman at the birth of her thirteenth or fourteenth child and only one or two would be living !

I don't know how many wives or concubines a man is allowed. Only the first one has any standing, and the number of the others is probably limited by his means. I remember hearing of one man, a Mr Feng, who had just married his second wife to another man because she was making his life too miserable for him. This was the man's side of the story ; I had heard the woman's the last time. I wonder how the case is put on these occasions. Does a man say he is parting with the lady with extreme regret because the climate does not suit her, or because his first wife does not like her, or because a sudden reverse of fortune has compelled him to reduce his household ? He surely would never have given the real reason. My friend Mr Farrer waxes enthusiastic over things Chinese, but I must say what I have seen of their domestic life repels me, and I am rather inclined to agree with a missionary of my acquaintance—a bachelor though—that it would give nervous prostration to a brazen statue.

There can be little happiness where there is ignorance, and the majority of the women of Shansi anyhow are the ignorant slaves of ignorant slaves. Miserere Domine !

CHAPTER VI

BY MOUNTAIN AND RIVER

SETTING out on a long journey by road, moving along slowly, at the rate of thirty miles a day, I find I do not have the end in view in my mind all the time. I do subconsciously, of course, or I would never get on at all, but I take a point a couple of days ahead and concentrate on getting there. Having arrived so far, I am so pleased with the performance I can concentrate on the next couple of days ahead. So I pass on comfortably, with the invigorating feeling of something accomplished.

Fen Chou Fu, then, was one of my jumping-off places.

And at Fen Chou Fu my muleteers began to complain. Looked at from a Western point of view, they ought to have complained long before, but their complaint was not what I expected. They sent my interpreter to say we were going the wrong way. This road would lead us out into a great bare place of sand. When the wind blew it would raise the sand in great clouds that would overwhelm us, and if the clouds gathered in the sky we should not be able to see the sun, we would not know in which direction to go and we should perish miserably. And having supplied me with this valuable and sinister information they stood back to watch it sink in.

It didn't have the damping and depressing effect they doubtless expected. To begin with, I couldn't believe in a Chinese sky where you couldn't see the sun. The clouds might gather, but a few hours would suffice to disperse them,

in my experience, and as for losing ourselves in the sand—well, I couldn't believe it possible. Always in China, wherever I had been, there had been plenty of people of whom to ask the way, and though every man's radius was doubtless short, still at every yard there was somebody. It was like an endless chain.

"Don't they want to go?" I asked Mr Wang.

"Repeat, please," said he, according to the approved formula.

"Won't they go?" I felt I had better have the matter clear.

"You say 'Go,' mus' go. You fear—you no go."

If I feared and wouldn't go on, I grasped, the money I paid them would be forfeit.

"But I must go. I am not afraid."

"They say you go by Hsi An Fu. That be plover." And the listening muleteers smiled at me blandly.

"But I cannot go by Hsi An Fu because of White Wolf." I did not say that also it would be going round two sides of a triangle because that would not appeal to the Chinese mind.

"They not knowing White Wolf," said Mr Wang, shaking his head.

"Well, I know White Wolf," I said, departing a little from the truth, "and I am going across the river to Sui Te Chou."

"You say 'Go,'" said Mr Wang sorrowfully, "mus' go," and he looked at the muleteers, and the muleteers looked at him sorrowfully and went off the verandah sorrowfully to prepare for the lonely road where there would be no people of whom to ask the way, only sand and no sun.

There was plenty of sun when we started. It was a glorious summer morning when my little caravan went out of the northern gate into the mountains that threatened the town. It was unknown China now, China as she was in the

time of the Cæsars, further back still in the time of the Babylonish kings, in the days before the first dynasty in Egypt. Out through the northern gate we went, by the clay-walled northern suburb, past great ash-heaps like little mountain ranges, the refuse of centuries, their softly rounded sides now tinged with the green of springtime, and almost at once my caravan was at the foot of the hills—hills carved into terraces by the daily toil of thousands, but looking as if they had been so carved by some giant hand. As we entered them as hills they promptly disappeared, for the road was sunken, and high over our heads rose the steep clay walls, shutting out all view save the bright strip of blue sky above.

I here put it on record—I believe I have done it before, but it really cannot be repeated too often—that as a conveyance a mule litter leaves much to be desired. Sitting up there on my bedding among my cushions, with James Buchanan beside me, I was much more comfortable than I should have been in a Peking cart, but also I was much more helpless. A driver did take charge of the Peking cart, but the gentleman who sometimes led my mule litter more often felt that things were safer in the charge of the big white mule in front, and when the way was extremely steep or rough he abandoned it entirely to its discretion. The missionaries had told me whenever I came to a bad place to be sure and get out, because the Chinese mules are not surefooted enough to be always trusted. They are quite likely at a bad place to slip and go over. This was a cheering reflection when I found myself at the bad place abandoned to the tender mercies of those animals. The mule in the lead certainly was a capable beast, but again and again, as I told Mr Wang, I would have preferred that the muleteers should not put quite so much faith in him. I learned to say

"B-r-rrr, b-r-r-rr!" when I wanted him to stop, but I did not like to say it often, because I felt in a critical moment I might seriously hamper him to my own disadvantage. I told Mr Wang I was to be lifted out when we came to bad places, but that too was hardly practicable, for we came to many places that I certainly could not have negotiated on my own feet, and how the mules got a cumbersome litter down or up them passes my understanding. Thinking it over, the only advice I can give to anyone who wishes to follow in my footsteps is to shut his eyes as I did and trust to the mule. And we went down some places that were calculated to take the curl out of my hair.

James Buchanan was a great comfort to me under these circumstances. He nestled down beside me—he had recovered from his accident before we left Fen Chou Fu—and he always assured me that everything would be all right. One thing he utterly declined to do, and that was to walk with the servants. I used to think it would be good for his health, but the wisdom of the little pekinese at the British American Tobacco Factory had sunk in deep and he declined to trust himself with them unless I walked too, when he was wild with delight. Put out by himself, he would raise a pitiful wail.

"Buchanan declines," Mr Wang would say sententiously, and he would be lifted back into the litter by my master of transport as if he were a prince of the blood at least. And if anyone thinks I make an absurd fuss about a little dog, I must remind him that I was entirely alone among an alien people, and the little dog's affection meant a tremendous deal to me. He took away all sense of loneliness. Looking back, I know now I could not have gone on, this book would never have been written, if it had not been for James Buchanan.



VILLAGE STREET.



LITTER WITH PACK SADDLE ACROSS IT IN INN YARD.



VILLAGE STREET.



PACK SADDLES OUTSIDE AN INN.

See page 103

Roughly the way to the Yellow River is through a chain of mountains, across a stony plateau in the centre of which is situated Yung Ning Chou, quite a busy commercial city, and across another chain of mountains through which the river forces its way. When first I entered the ditch in the loess my objective was Yung Ning Chou. I looked no farther. I wanted to get to that town in which seven Scandinavian missionaries in twenty years had not effected a single convert. The cliffs frowned overhead, and the effect to me was of wandering along an extremely stony way with many pitfalls in it to the chiming of many mule bells and an unceasing shouting of "*Ta, ta!*"—that is, "*Beat, beat!*"—a threat by which the muleteer exhorts his animals to do their best. Generally speaking, I couldn't see the man who had charge of me because he was some way behind and the tilt shut him from my view. Except for knowing that he was attending to his job and looking after me, I don't know that I pined to look upon him. His appearance was calculated to make me feel I had not wakened from a nightmare. Sometimes he wore a dirty rag over his head, but just as often he went in his plain beauty unadorned—that is to say, with all the front part of his head shaven and the back a mass of wild coarse black hair standing out at all angles. They had cut off his queue during the reforming fever at T'ai Yuan Fu and I presume he was doing the best he could till it should grow again. Certainly it was an awe-inspiring headpiece.

And always we progressed to the clashing of bells, for on every possible point on the trappings of the four mules and the donkey that made up the caravan and on every available point on the harness of every mule and donkey that passed us was a brass bell. For, for all my muleteers had objected to going this way, it was a caravan route to the West, and

it was seldom we did not see someone on the road. Here in this ditch in the loess I realised the stern necessity for these bells, for often the way was narrow and when we could hear another caravan coming we could make arrangements to pass or to allow them to pass. There were many caravans of ragged camels, and to these my animals objected with all the spirit a life on the roads had still left in them. When we met a string of them at close quarters in the loess my white mule in the lead nearly had hysterics, and his feelings were shared, so I judged by the behaviour of the litter, by his companion behind, and they both endeavoured to commit suicide by climbing the bank, having no respect whatever for my feelings.

On these occasions, with clenched teeth and concentrated energy, my muleteer addressed himself to that leading mule :

“ Now ! Who’s your mother ? You may count yourself as dead ! ”

The mule evidently felt this was serious and made a desperate endeavour to get a little higher, and his attendant became sarcastic.

“ Call yourself a mule ! Call yourself a lord, sir ! ”

By the jangling of the bells and the yells of the rest of the company I knew that the other animals felt equally bad, and more than once I saw my luckless interpreter, who evidently was not much of a hand at sitting on a pack, ruefully picking himself up and shaking the dust from his person, his mule having flung him as a protest against the polluting of the road by a train of camels.

The camels march along with a very supercilious air, but mules, horses and donkeys all fear them so much that there are special inns for them and they are supposed only to travel by night, but this rule is more honoured, I imagine, in the breach than in the observance. Most parts of the

road I don't see that any caravan could pass along at night. The special inns do not present any difference to my unprejudiced eyes from the discomfort of an ordinary mule and donkey inn. I stopped at one one day in the loess for tiffin, and it consisted of a courtyard round which were rooms (*yaos*) that were simply caves with the mouths bricked up and doors in them. Inside, the caves were dark and airless, with for all furniture the universal, *k'ang*; a fireplace is either in the middle or at one of the ends, and the flues underneath carry the hot air under the *k'ang* to warm it. I have never before or since seen such miserable dwelling-places as these *yaos*, and in the loess country I saw hundreds of them, inhabited by thousands of people. Wu Ch'eng particularly commended itself to my notice because here I first realised that in expecting a room to myself I was asking too much of the country.

We crossed the mountain pass the first day out of Fen Chou Fu. Steep it was, steep as the roof of a house, and we scrambled down the other side and, just as the dusk was falling, we came to Wu Ch'eng, a village mostly of *yaos* in the mountain-side. Wu Ch'eng, where hundreds of people live and die, was short of most things that make life worth living: water was very scarce indeed, and there were no eggs there. It was necessary that our little company should move on with what speed we might. Also the inn only had one room.

"The *k'ang* is large," said my interpreter, as if he thought that a woman who would come out on this journey would not mind sharing that *k'ang* with all the other guests, the innkeeper and his servants. It was rather large. I looked into an earthen cave the end of which, about thirty feet away, I could hardly make out in the dim light. There were great cobwebs hanging from the ceiling—dimly I saw them

by the light that filtered through the dirty paper that did duty for a window—and the high *k'ang* occupied the whole length of the room, leaving a narrow passage with hard-beaten earth for a floor about two feet wide between the *k'ang* and the left-hand wall. It was about as uninviting a room as I have ever seen. Also it was clearly impossible that Buchanan and I should turn out the rest of the company, so I decreed that I should have it to myself for half-an-hour for the purposes of washing and changing, for which privilege I paid about twenty cash, roughly a ha'penny, and then we slept in the litter, as we did on many other occasions, outside in the yard among the donkeys and mules. The last thing I saw was the bright stars peeping down at me, and the last thing I heard was the mules munching at their well-earned chaff, and I wakened to the same stars and the same sounds, for early retiring is conducive to early rising, and yet the muleteers were always before me and were feeding their beasts. Always I went through the same routine. I went to bed despairing and disgusted and a little afraid. I slept like the dead, if I slept outside, and I wakened to watch the sun rise and renew my hopes.

There are hundreds, probably thousands, of villages like Wu Ch'eng in China. The winter in Shansi in the mountains is Arctic and no words can describe what must be the sufferings of these people; especially must the women suffer, for the poorest peasant binds his daughter's feet, his wife can hardly crawl. In Chihli you may see the women tottering round on their stumps grinding the corn, in Shansi lucky is the woman who can do so much. The ordinary peasant woman is equal to nothing but a little needlework, if she have anything to sew, or to making a little porridge, if she can do so without moving off the *k'ang*.

The getting something for the men to cook must be a hard job. Potatoes are sold singly, other vegetables are cut in halves or quarters, a fowl is always sold by the joint. There may be people who do buy a whole fowl, but they are probably millionaires. I suppose a whole section of a community could not possibly exist on other folks' old clothes, but that is how the people of this part of Shansi looked as if they were clothed. They had not second-hand clothes or third-hand, they were apparently the remnants that the third buyer could find no use for.

I shall never forget on one occasion seeing a ragged scarecrow bearing on the end of a pole a dead dog, not even an ordinary dead dog, but one all over sores, a most disgustingly diseased specimen. I asked Mr Wang what he was carrying that dog away for and that young gentleman looked at me in surprise. He would never get to the bottom of this foolish foreigner.

"For eat," said he simply!

The people of the loess cannot afford to waste anything save the health of their women. A dog, a wonk, shares the scavenging work of the Chinese towns with the black and white crows, and doubtless the citizens do not care so much for eating them as they would a nice juicy leg of mutton, but they would no more throw away a wonk that had found life in a Chinese town too hard and simply died than I would yesterday's leg of mutton in favour of the tender chicken I prefer.

This, the first camel inn I particularly noticed, was not far from Fen Chou Fu, and they told me how many years ago one of the medical missionaries touring the country found there the innkeeper's wife with one of her bound feet in a terrible condition. She had a little baby at her breast and she was suffering horribly—the foot was gangrenous. The

doctor was troubled and puzzled as well. He had no appliances and no drugs, but left as they were, mother and baby, already half starved, were doomed. Therefore, like a brave man as he was, he took his courage in both hands, made a saw of a piece of scrap iron from an American packing-case and with this rude instrument and no anæsthetics he amputated that foot. And the woman survived, lived to see her child grow up, was living when I passed along that way, and I sat in her courtyard and had my tiffin of hard-boiled eggs and puffed rice washed down by tea. It was her son's courtyard then, possibly that very baby's whose life the missionary had saved by saving his mother's. For the Chinese have no milch cows or goats and know little about feeding infants artificially.

Always at midday the litter was lifted off the mules' backs, my table and chair were produced from some recess among the packs, my blue cotton tablecloth was spread and Tsai Chih Fu armed himself with a frying-pan in which to warm the rice and offered it to me along with hard-boiled eggs of dubious age. The excellent master of transport was a bad cook, and it is not an exhilarating diet when it is served up three times a day for weeks with unfailing regularity. I never grew so weary of anything in my life, and occasionally I tried to vary it by buying little scones or cakes peppered with sesame seed, but I'm bound to say they were all nasty. It always seemed to me that an unfair amount of grit from the millstones had got into the flour. Chinese are connoisseurs in their cooking, but not in poor little villages in the mountains in Western Shansi, where they are content if they can fill their starving stomachs. To judge Chinese taste by the provisions of these mountaineers is as if we condemned the food of London, having sampled only those shops where a steak pudding can be had for fourpence.

And all these little inns, these underground inns, very

often had the most high-sounding names. "The Inn of Increasing Righteousness"—I hope it was, there was certainly nothing else to recommend it; but the "Inn of Ten Thousand Conveniences" really made the greatest claim upon my faith. The Ritz or the Carlton could hardly have claimed more than this cave with the hard-beaten earth for the floor of its one room and for all furnishing the *k'ang* where landlord and guests slept in company.

Yet all these uncomfortable inns between Fen Chou Fu and Yung Ning Chou were thronged. The roads outside were littered with the packs of the mules and donkeys, and inside the courtyard all was bustle, watering and feeding the animals and attending to the wants of the men, who apparently took most of their refreshment out of little basins with chopsticks and when they were very wealthy, or on great occasions, had tea without milk or sugar—which, of course, is the proper way to drink it—out of little handleless cups. I don't know that they had anything else to drink except hot water. I certainly never saw them drinking anything intoxicating, and I believe there are no public-houses in China proper.

Every now and then the way through the loess widened a little and there was an archway with a tower above it and a crowded village behind. Always the villages were crowded. There was very often one or perhaps two trees shading the principal street, but other hints of garden or greenery there were none. The shops—open stalls—were packed together. And in these little villages it is all slum: there is no hint of country life, and the street was full of people, ragged people, mostly men and children. The men were in rags in all shades of blue, and blue worn and washed—at least possibly the washing is doubtful, we will say worn only—to dun dirt colour. It was not picturesque, but filthy, and the only hint of luxury was a pipe a yard long with a

very tiny bowl which when not in use hung round their necks or stuck out behind from under their coats. Round their necks too would be hung a tiny brass tobacco box with hieroglyphics upon it which contained the evil-smelling compound they smoked. Sometimes they were at work in their alfresco kitchens—never have I seen so much cooking done in the open air—sometimes they were shoeing a mule, sometimes waiting for customers for their cotton goods, or their pottery ware, or their unappetising cooked stuff, and often they were nursing babies, little black-eyed bundles of variegated dirty rags which on inspection resolved themselves into a coat and trousers, whatever the age or the sex of the baby. And never have I seen so many family men. The Chinaman is a good father and is not ashamed to carry his baby. At least so I judge.

Only occasionally was a woman or two to be seen, sitting on their doorsteps gossiping in the sun or the shade, according to the temperature. Men and women stared at the foreign woman with all their eyes, for foreigners are rather like snow in June in these parts, and my coming made me feel as if a menagerie had arrived in the villages so great and interested were the crowds that assembled to look at and comment on me.

After we passed through the loess the track was up a winding ravine cut in past ages by the agency of water. From five hundred to a thousand feet above us towered the cliffs and at their feet trickled a tiny drain of water, not ankle-deep, that must once have come down a mighty flood to cut for itself such a way through the eternal hills. For this, unlike the road through the loess, is a broad way where many caravans might find room. And this trickle was the beginnings of a tributary to the Yellow River. Along its winding banks lay the caravan route.



THE CLIFFS AFTER THE LOESS.

See page 104.



LOADS OF STRAW HATS.

See page 105.



BRIDGE OUTSIDE YUNG NING CHOU.

See page 108.



AUTHOR'S CARAVAN CROSSING A RIVER.

See page 108.

And many caravans were passing. No place in China is lonely. There were strings of camels, ragged and losing their coats—second-hand goods, Mark Twain calls them—there were strings of pack-mules and still longer strings of little donkeys, and there were many men with bamboos across their shoulders and loads slung from either end. Some of these men had come from Peking and were bound for far Kansu, the other side of Shensi; but as I went on fewer and fewer got the loads from Kansu, most of them stopped at Yung Ning Chou, the last walled town of any size this side of the river. Always, always through the loess, through the deep ravines, across the mountain passes, across the rocky plateau right away to the little mountain city was the stream coming and going, bearing Pekingese and Cantonese goods into the mountains, and coming back laden with wheat, which is the principal product of these places.

Ask the drivers where they were going, camel, mule or donkey, and the answer was always the same, they were going east or west, which, of course, we could see for ourselves. There was no possibility of going any other way. Those in authority knew whither they were bound, but the ignorant drivers knew nothing but the direction. At least that is one explanation, the one I accepted at the time, afterwards I came to know it is a breach of good manners to exhibit curiosity in China, and quite likely my interpreter simply greeted the caravans and made his own answer to my question. It satisfied or at least silenced me and saved my face.

One thing, however, grew more and more noticeable: the laden beasts were coming east, going west the pack-saddles were empty. Fear was upon the merchants and they would not send goods across the great river into turbulent Shensi.

Already, so said my interpreter, and I judged the truth of his statement by the empty pack-saddles, they were fearing to send goods into the mountains at all. It was pleasant for me. I began to think. I had only Buchanan to consult, and he had one great drawback, he always agreed that what I thought was likely to be right. It is an attitude of mind that I greatly commend in my friends and desire to encourage, but there are occasions in life when a little perfectly disinterested advice would be most acceptable, and that I could not get. Badly I wanted to cross Asia, but I should not cross Asia if I were stopped by *tufeis*, which is the local term for robbers. Were these rumours anything, or were they manufactured by my interpreter? There were the warnings of the missionaries, and there were the empty pack-saddles, and the empty pack-saddles spoke loudly. Still I thought I might go on a little farther, and James Buchanan encouraged me.

Truly the way to the great river through the mountains was hard. Taking all the difficulties in the lump, it would seem impossible to overcome them, but taking them one by one I managed it. And not the least of my troubles were the dogs.

Here in the mountains was a very handsome breed of large white dogs with long hair, at least I am sure they would have been handsome if they had been well fed and well eared for. If it had not been for Buchanan, whose heart it would have broken, I should certainly have got a puppy to bring home with me. These dogs one and all waged war on my little friend, who had a great idea of his own importance and probably aggravated the ill-fed denizens of the inn-yards. He would go hectoring down a yard, head up, white plume waving, with a sort of "Well, here we are! Now what have you got to say for yourselves?" air about him, and in

two seconds more a big white scarecrow of a dog would have him by the neck, dragging him across the yard, designing to slay him behind the drinking troughs. He would give one shriek for help, and I would fly to that dog's head, catch him by the ears or the ruff round his neck and be dragged along in my turn till Tsai Chih Fu the resourceful appeared on the scene with a billet of wood, and then the unfortunate beast would be banished from the yard or tied up till we had gone. I remembered often the warning I had received on the subject of hydrophobia, but I never had time to think of that till afterwards, when, of course, if anything had happened it would have been too late.

There is one thing about a Chinese inn in the interior: it may be exceedingly uncomfortable, but it is also exceedingly cheap. A night's lodging as a rule costs forty cash. Eleven cash roughly is equal to a cent, and a cent, again roughly—it depends upon the price of silver—is a little less than a farthing. Forty cash, then, is hardly a penny. Hot water costs eight cash, eggs were six cash apiece and so were the wheaten scones I bought in place of the bread my servant could not make, and I could buy those last as low as three cash apiece. Of course I quite understand that I as a rich traveller paid top price for everything, probably twice or three times as much as the ordinary traveller; the missionaries, indeed, were shocked at the price I paid for eggs, and again I was always rooked in the matter of paper. For even though I preferred it, it often happened that it was impossible to sleep in my litter in the yard, it was too crowded with beasts—and it had to be very crowded—and then I stripped off the paper from the window of the room I occupied to let in the air, just a little air, and I was charged accordingly from thirty to eighty

cash for my destructiveness. I found afterwards that a whole sheet of new paper can be had for ten cash, and the paper I destroyed was not half-a-sheet and was grimed with the dirt of ages ! Glass, of course, in the mountains of Shansi is almost unknown and the windows are covered with white paper.

After the mountains came a high stony plateau, not dangerous but difficult, for though this is a great trade route there was not an inch of smooth roadway, every step had to be carefully picked among the stones, and presently the stream that when we entered the mountains was a trickle a hand's-breadth across was now a river meandering among the stones. We began by stepping across it ; wider it grew and there were stepping-stones for the walking muleteers ; then the mules waded and the muleteers climbed on to the beasts or on to the front of the litter, which last proceeding made me very uncomfortable, for I remembered my special man was likely at most only to have been washed twice in his life, and I was very sure his clothes had never been washed at all and probably had never been taken off his back since last October. Finally we crossed by bridges, fairly substantial bridges three planks wide, but the mules required a deal of encouraging before they would trust them and always felt the boards gingerly with their hoofs first as if they distrusted the Chinaman and all his engineering works. The engineering was probably all right, but as the state of repair often left much to be desired I could hardly blame the mules for their caution. And one day we crossed that river twenty-six times !

There is no charm in the country in Shansi beyond the sunshine and the invigorating air. There were fields, every patch of land that could possibly be made to grow a blade

of wheat was most carefully tilled, there was not a weed, not a blade of grass out of place. In some fields the crops were springing green, in others the farmers were still ploughing, with a patient ox in the plough; but there were no divisions between these fields; there were no hedges; few and scanty trees; no gardens; no farmhouses, picturesque or otherwise. The peasants all live huddled together, literally in the hill-sides, and of the beauty of life there was none. It was toil, toil without remission and with never a day off. Even the blue sky and the sunshine and the invigorating dry air must be discounted by the dirt and darkness and airlessness of the houses and the underground *yaos*. The Chinese peasant's idea in building a house seems to be to get rid of the light and the air, the only two things I should have thought that make his life bearable. And in these dark and airless caves the crippled women spend their days. The younger women—I met them occasionally gaily clad and mounted on a donkey—looked waxen and had an air of suffering, and the older were lined and had a look of querulousness and irritability that was not on the men's faces. Many an old man have I seen whose face might stand for a model of prosperous, contented, peaceful old age looking back on a well-lived life, but never, never have I seen such a look on a woman's face.

At last, after crossing a long bridge across the river, we came to Yung Ning Chou. The dark grey wall stood out against the blue sky and, unlike most Chinese cities that I have seen, there is no watch-tower over the gate. It has suburbs, suburbs like Fen Chou Fu enclosed in crumbling clay walls that are fast drifting to their inevitable end. They could not keep out a rabbit now, let alone a man, and yet they are entered through great brick gateways with a

turn in them, and going under the archways I felt as usual as if I had gone back to Biblical days. The walls of the city proper, the crowded little city, are in better preservation, and tower high above the caravans that pass round them, for there are no inns in Yung Ning Chou and all caravans must stay in the eastern suburb. There are narrow, stony little streets of houses pressed close together, and the rough roadways are crowded with traffic: people, donkeys, laden mules and grunting camels are for ever passing to and fro. Looking up the principal street between the eastern and the western gate was like looking up a dark tunnel in which fluttered various notices, the shop signs, Chinese characters printed on white calico. Most of those signs, according to my interpreter's translation, bore a strong resemblance to one another. "Virtue and Abundance," it seems they proclaimed to all who could read. But there was no one to tell me whether there was really any wealth in this little mountain city that is the same now as it probably was a thousand years ago. I wondered, I could not help wondering, whether it would be worth Pai Lang's while to attack. I wondered if he could get in if he did, for the walls were high and the gates, rising up straight and sheer without watch towers, such piles of masonry as might have been built by conquering Nineveh or Babylon. Here and there, though, in the walls the water had got under the clay and forced out the bricks in long deep cracks, and here if they were not carefully guarded were places that an invading force might storm, and in the suburbs and among the houses that clustered close under the protecting walls terrible things might be done. But the western gate, I should say, is well-nigh impregnable. Nobody but a Chinaman would have built a gate in such a place. It opens out

on to a steep cliff that falls sheer sixty feet to the river below. Chinese towns are always built symmetrically; there should be at least one gate in each of the four walls, therefore a gate there is here. It seems to have occurred to no one that a gate is placed in those walls for the convenience of traffic, and that it is simple waste of time and labour to make a gate in a place by which no one could possibly pass. For that matter I should have thought a wall unnecessary on top of so steep a cliff.

The Scandinavian missionaries who have faithfully worked Yung Ning Chou for the last twenty years with so little result were absent when I passed through. Only two of them live here, the rest are scattered over the mountains to the north, and when I was in Fen Chou Fu I met a woman, a Norwegian, who was on her way to join them. She remains in my mind a pathetic figure of sacrifice, a wistful woman who was giving of her very best and yet was haunted by the fear that all she was giving was of very little worth, surely the most bitter and sorrowful reflection in this world. She had worked in China as a missionary in her girlhood. She explained to me how hard it was for these northern peoples, for to learn Chinese they have first to learn English. Then she married, and after her little girl was born her husband died and so she took her treasure home to educate her in Norway. But she died and, feeling her duty was to the Chinese, back came the lonely mother, and when I met her she was setting out for the little walled city in the hills where she dwelt with some other women. A strangely lonely life, devoid of all pleasures, theirs must have been. I was struck with the little things that pleased this devoted woman, such little things, and we who may enjoy them every day go calmly on our way and never appreciate them. She wore

the unbecoming Chinese dress, with her white hair drawn back from her face, and her blue eyes looked out wistfully as if she were loath to give up hope that somewhere, somehow, in the world individual happiness, that would be for her alone, would come to her. During the revolution they, remembering the troubles and dangers of the Boxer time, had refugeed in Tientsin, and the days there were evidently marked with a white stone in her calendar.

"It was so delightful," she said in her pretty precise English, "to see the European children in the gardens."

How her heart went out to those children. They reminded her, I suppose, of the little girl she had left behind sleeping her last sleep among the Norwegian mountains.

"Oh, the children!" she sighed. "It brought a lump in your throat to look at them!"

It brought a lump in my throat to look at her as I saw her set out for her home with two little black-eyed Chinese girls crowded in the litter beside her. She was taking them home from the school at Fen Chou Fu. The loneliness of her life! The sacrifice of it! I wonder if those three women, shut away in that little walled town, made any converts. I doubt it, for theirs, like the Yung Ning Chou mission, was purely a faith mission.

Unmarried women and widows were these three women. The Yung Ning Chou mission consists of four old bachelors and three old maids. Not for a moment do I suppose the majority of the Chinese believe they are what they are, men and women living the lives of ascetics, giving up all for their faith, and the absence of children in child-loving China must seriously handicap them in their efforts to spread their faith. Think of the weary years of those workers toiling so hopelessly in an alien land among a poor and alien population, whose first impulse is certainly to



EAST GATE OF YUNG NING CHOU.
See page 109.



LOOKING UP THE MAIN STREET
YUNG NING CHOU. *See page 110.*



GATE OF A TOWN NEAR TO LIU LIN CHEN.
See page 113.



ARCHWAY WITH THEATRICAL NOTICES LIU LIN CHEN.

despise them. All honour to those workers even though they have failed in their object so far as human eye can see, and even though that object makes no appeal to people like me.

And I passed on through Yung Ning Chou, on across the stony plateau, and at last, at a village called Liu Lin Chen, I was brought up with a sharp turn with a tale of Pai Lang.

I was having my midday meal. Not that it was midday. It was four o'clock, and I had breakfasted at 6 A.M.; but time is of no account in China. Liu Lin Chen was the proper place at which to stop for the noonday rest, so we did not stop till we arrived there, though the badness of the road had delayed us. I was sitting in the inn-yard waiting for Tsai Chih Fu to bring me the eternal hard-boiled eggs and puffed rice when Mr Wang came up, accompanied by the two muleteers, and they—that is, the two muleteers—dropped down to the ground and clamoured, so I made out from his excited statements that the gates of Sui Te Chou had been closed for the last four days on account of Pai Lang! And Sui Te Chou was the first town I proposed to stop at after I crossed the river! If I would go to Lan Chou Fu and on through Sin Kiang to the Russian border through Sui Te Chou I must go. There was no other way. These days in the mountains had shown me that to stray from the caravan road was an utter impossibility. Had I been one of the country people conversant with the language I think it would have been impossible. As it was, I had my choice. I might go on or I might go back. Mr Wang apparently thought there should be no doubt in my mind. He evidently expected I would turn tail there and then, and I myself realised—I had been realising ever since round the table in

the mission station at Ki Hsien we had read Dr Edwards' letter—that my journey across the continent was ended; but to turn tail in this ignominious fashion, having seen nothing, within, I suppose, twenty-five miles of the Yellow River, with the country about me as peaceful as the road in Kent in which I live at present, how could I? It was more peaceful, in fact, for now at night searchlights stream across the sky, within a furlong of my house bombs have been dropped and men have been killed, and by day and by night the house rocks as motors laden with armament and instruments of war thunder past. But there in Shansi in the fields the people worked diligently, in the village the archway over which they held theatrical representations was placarded with notices, and in the inn-yard where I sat the people went about attending to the animals as if there was nothing to be feared. And I felt lonely, and James Buchanan sat close beside me because at the other side of the very narrow yard a great big white dog with a fierce face and a patch of mange on his side looked at him threateningly.

"I'll have none of your drawing-room dogs here," said he.

But Buchanan's difficulties were solved when he appealed to me. I—and I was feeling it horribly—had no one to appeal to. I must rely upon myself.

And then to add to my woes it began to rain, soft, gentle spring rain, growing rain that must have been a godsend to the whole country-side.

It stopped, and Mr Wang and the muleteers looked at me anxiously.

"We will go on," I said firmly, "to the Yellow River."

Their faces fell. I could see the disappointment, but still I judged I might go in safety so far.

"Don't they want to go?" I asked Mr Wang.

"Repeat, please," said he. So I repeated, and he said as he had said before:

"If you say 'Go,' mus' go."

And I said "Go."

CHAPTER VII

CHINA'S SORROW

"It is better," says a Chinese proverb, "to hear about a thing than to see it," and truly on this journey I was much inclined to agree with that dictum.

We were bound for Hsieh Ts'un. I can't pronounce it, and I should not like to swear to the spelling, but of one thing I am very sure, not one of the inhabitants could spell it, or even know it was wrongly set forth to the world, so I am fairly safe.

We went under the archway with the theatrical notices at Liu Lin Chen, under the arched gateway of the village, out into the open country, and it began to rain again. It came down not exactly in torrents but good steady growing rain. The roads when they were not slippery stones were appalling quagmires, and my mule litter always seemed to be overhanging a precipice of some sort. I was not very comfortable when that precipice was only twenty feet deep, when it was more I fervently wished that I had not come to China. I wished it more than once, and it rained and it rained and it rained, silent, soaking, penetrating rain, and I saw the picturesque mountain country through a veil of mist.

Hsieh Ts'un is a little dirty straggling village, and as we entered it through the usual archway with a watch tower above the setting sun broke through the thick clouds and his golden rays streamed down upon the slippery wet cobblestones that paved the principal street. The golden sunlight

and the gorgeous rainbow glorified things a little, and they needed glorifying. The principal inn, as usual, was a fairly large yard, roughly paved, but swimming now in dirty water ; there were stalls for animals all round it, and there was a large empty shed where they stored lime. It was stone-paved, and the roof leaked like a sieve, but here I established myself, dodging as far as possible the holes in the roof and drawing across the front of the shed my litter as a sort of protection, for the inn, as usual with these mountain inns, had but one room.

It was cold, it was dirty, and I realised how scarce foreigners must be when through the misty, soaking rain, which generally chokes off a Chinaman, crowds came to stand round and stare at me. I was stationary, so the women came, dirty, ragged, miserable-looking women, supporting themselves with sticks and holding up their babies to look at the stranger while she ate. By and by it grew so cold I felt I must really go to bed, and I asked Mr Wang to put it to the crowd that it was not courteous to stare at the foreign woman when she wished to be alone, and, O most courtly folk ! every single one of those people went away.

"You can have a bath," said he, "no one will look"; and, all honour give I to those poor peasants of Western Shansi, I was undisturbed. I am afraid a lonely Chinese lady would hardly be received with such courtesy in an English village were the cases reversed.

Next day the rain still teemed down. The fowls pecked about the yard, drenched and dripping ; a miserable, mangy, cream-coloured dog or two came foraging for a dinner, and the people, holding wadded coats and oiled paper over their heads, came to look again at the show that had come to the town ; but there was no break in the grey sky, and there was nothing to do but sit there shivering with cold, writing letters

on my little travelling table and listening to my interpreter, who talked with the innkeeper and brought me at intervals that gentleman's views on the doings of Pai Lang.

Those views varied hour by hour. At first he was sure he was attacking Sui Te Chou. That seemed to me sending the famous robber over the country too quickly. Then it was *tufes*—that is, bands of robbers—that Sui Te Chou feared, and finally, boiled down, I came to the conclusion that Sui Te Chou had probably shut her gates because the country round was disturbed, and that she admitted no one who had not friends in the city or could not in some way guarantee his good faith. It served to show me my friends in Ki Hsien had been right, such disturbed country would be no place for a woman alone. I suppose it was the rain and the grey skies, but I must admit that day I was distinctly unhappy and more than a little afraid. I was alone among an alien people, who only regarded me as a cheap show; I had no one to take counsel with, my interpreter only irritated me and, to add to my misery, I was very cold. I have seldom put in a longer or more dreary day than I did at Hsieh Ts'un. There was absolutely nothing to do but watch the misty rain, for if I went outside and got wetter than I was already getting under the leaking roof—I wore my Burberry—I had no possible means of drying my clothes save by laying them on the hot *k'ang* in the solitary living-room of the inn, and that was already inhabited by many humans and the parasites that preyed upon them. Therefore I stayed where I was, compared my feet with the stumps of the women who came to visit me—distinctly I was a woman's show—gave the grubby little children raisins, and wondered if there was any fear of Pai Lang coming along this way before I had time to turn back. If it kept on raining, would my muleteers compel me to stay here till Pai

Lang swept down upon us ? But no, that thought did not trouble me, first, because I momentarily expected it to clear up, and secondly, because I was very sure that any rain that kept me prisoner would also hold up Pai Lang. I could not believe in a Chinaman, even a robber, going out in the rain if he could help himself, any more than I could believe in it raining longer than a day in China.

"The people are not afraid," I said to my interpreter as I looked at a worn old woman in a much-patched blue cotton smock and trousers, her head protected from the rain by a wadded coat in the last stages of decrepitude ; her feet made me shiver, and her finger-nails made me crawl, the odour that came from her was sickening, but she liked to see me write, and I guessed she had had but few pleasures in her weary life.

"They not knowing yet," said he ; " only travellers know. They tell innkeeper."

Yes, certainly the travellers would know best.

And all day long he came, bringing me various reports, and said that, according to the innkeeper, the last caravan that had passed through had gone back on its tracks. I might have remembered it. I did remember it—a long line of donkeys and mules.

But the day passed, and the night passed, and the next day the sun came out warm and pleasant, and all my doubts were resolved. My journey was broken beyond hope, and I must go back, but turn I would not till I had looked upon the Yellow River.

We started with all our paraphernalia. We were to turn in our tracks after tiffin, but Mr Wang and the muleteers were certain on that point, everything I possessed must be dragged across the mountains if I hoped to see it again, and I acquiesced, for I certainly felt until I

got back to civilisation I could not do without any of my belongings.

Almost immediately we left the village we began to ascend the mountain pass. Steeper and steeper it grew, and at last the opening in my mule litter was pointing straight up to the sky, and I, seeing there was nothing else for it, demanded to be lifted out and signified my intention of walking.

There was one thing against this and that was an attack of breathlessness. Asthma always attacks me when I am tired or worried, and now, with a very steep mountain to cross and no means of doing it except on my own feet, it had its wicked way. My master of transport and Mr Wang, like perfectly correct Chinese servants, each put a hand under my elbows, and with Buchanan skirmishing around joyfully, rejoicing that for once his mistress was sensible, the little procession started. It was hard work, very hard work. When I could go no longer I sat down and waited till I felt equal to starting again. On the one hand the mountain rose up sheer and steep, on the other it dropped away into the gully beneath, only to rise again on the other side. And yet in the most inaccessible places were patches of cultivation and wheat growing. I cannot imagine how man or beast kept a footing on such a slant, and how they ploughed and sowed it passes my understanding. But most of the mountain-side was too much even for them, and then they turned loose their flocks, meek cream-coloured sheep and impudent black goats, to graze on the scanty mountain pastures. Of course they were in charge of a shepherd, for there were no fences, and the newly springing wheat must have been far more attractive than the scanty mountain grasses.

And then I knew it was worth it all—the long trek from Fen Chou Fu, the dreary day at Hsieh Ts'un, the still more



AT THE TOP OF THE PASS.

See Page 122.



THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS TO THE YELLOW RIVER.

See page 122.



FIRST SIGHT OF HOANG HO.

See page 122.



THE HOANG HO AT CHUN PU.

See page 124

dreary nights, this stiff climb which took more breath than I had to spare—for the view when I arrived at a point of vantage was beautiful. These were strange mountains. The road before me rose at a very steep angle, and all around me were hill-sides whereon only a goat or a sheep might find foothold, but the general effect looked at from a distance was not of steepness. These were not mountains, rugged, savage, grand, they were gentle hills and dales that lay about me; I had come through them; there were more ahead; I could see them range after range, softly rounded, green and brown and then blue, beautiful for all there were no trees, in an atmosphere that was clear as a mirror after the rain of the day before. Beautiful, beautiful, with a tender entrancing loveliness, is that view over the country up in the hills that hem in the Yellow River as it passes between Shansi and Shensi. Is it possible there is never anyone to see it but these poor peasants who wring a hard livelihood from the soil, and who for all their toil, which lasts from daylight to dark all the year round, get from this rich soil just enough wheaten flour to keep the life in them, a hovel to dwell in, and a few unspeakable rags to cover their nakedness? As far as I could see, everyone was desperately poor, and yet these hills hold coal and iron in close proximity, wealth untold and unexploited. The pity of it! Unexploited, the people are poor to the verge of starvation; worked, the delicate loveliness of the country-side will vanish as the beauty of the Black Country has vanished, and can we be sure that the peasant will benefit?

Still we went up and up, and the climbing of these gentle wooing hills I found hard. Steep it was, and at last, just when I felt I could not possibly go any farther, though the penalty were that I should turn back almost within sight of the river, I found that the original makers of the track

had been of the same opinion, for here was the top of the pass with a tunnel bored through it, a tunnel perhaps a hundred feet long, carefully bricked, and when we, breathless and panting, walked through we came out on a little plateau with a narrow road wandering down a mountain-side as steep as the one we had just climbed. There was the most primitive of restaurants here, and the woman in charge—it was a woman, and her feet were not bound—proffered us a thin sort of drink like very tasteless barley water. At least now I know it was tasteless, then I found it was nectar, and I sat on a stone and drank it thankfully, gave not a thought to the dirt of the bowl that contained it, and drew long breaths and looked around me.

The hills rose up on either hand and away in the distance where they opened out were the beautiful treeless hills of forbidden Shensi, just as alluring, just as peaceful as the hills I had come through. It was worth the long and toilsome journey, well worth even all my fears.

Then we went down, down, but I did not dare get into my litter, the way was too steep, the chances of going over too great, for it seems the Chinese never make a road if by any chance they can get along without. They were driven to bore a tunnel through the mountains, but they never smooth or take away rocks as long as, by taking a little care, an animal can pass without the certainty of going over the cliff.

And at last through a cleft in the hills I saw one of the world's great rivers and—was disappointed. The setting was ideal. The hills rose up steep and rugged, real mountains, on either side, pheasants called, rock-doves mourned, magpies chattered, overhead was a clear blue sky just flecked here and there with fleecy clouds, beyond again were the mountains of Shensi, the golden sunlight on their rounded tops, purple shadow in their swelling folds, far away in the

distance they melted blue into the blue sky, close at hand they were green with the green of springtime, save where the plough had just turned up patches of rich brown soil, and at their foot rolled a muddy flood that looked neither decent water nor good sound earth, the mighty Hoang-Ho, the Yellow River, China's sorrow. China's sorrow indeed; for though here it was hemmed in by mountains, and might not shift its bed, it looked as if it were carrying the soul of the mountains away to the sea.

There is a temple where the gully opens on to the river, a temple and a little village, and the temple was crowded with blue-clad, shabby-looking soldiers who promptly swarmed round me and wanted to look in my baggage, that heavy baggage we were hauling for safety over fourteen miles of mountain road. Presumably they were seeking arms. We managed to persuade them there were none, and that the loads contained nothing likely to disturb the peace, and then we went down to the river, crossing by a devious, rocky and unpleasant path simply reeking of human occupancy, and the inhabitants of that soldier village crowded round me and examined everything I wore and commented on everything I did.

They were there to guard the crossing; and far from me be it to say they were not most efficient, but if so their looks belied them. They did not even look toy soldiers. No man was in full uniform. Apparently they wore odd bits, as if there were not enough clothes in the company to go round, and they were one and all dirty, touzly, untidy, and all smiling and friendly and good-tempered. I only picked them out from the surrounding country people—who were certainly dirty and poverty-stricken enough in all conscience—by the fact that the soldiers had abandoned the queue which the people around, like all these country people, still

affect. The soldier wore his hair about four or five inches long, sticking out at all angles, rusty-black, unkempt and uncombed, and whether he ran to a cap or not, the result was equally unworkmanlike.

I conclude Chun Pu is not a very important crossing. What the road is like on the Shensi side I do not know, but on the Shansi side I should think the pass we had just crossed was a very effective safeguard. He would be a bold leader who would venture to bring his men up that path in the face of half-a-dozen armed men, and they need not be very bold men either. Those soldiers did not look bold. They were kindly, though, and they had women and children with them—I conclude their own, for they nursed the grubby little children, all clad in grubby patches, very proudly, took such good care they had a good view of the show—me—that I could not but sympathise with their paternal affection and aid in every way in my power. Generally my good-will took the form of raisins. I was lavish now I had given up my journey, and my master of transport distributed with an air as if I were bestowing gold and silver.

He set out my table on the cobble-stones of the inn-yard in the sunshine. I believe, had I been a really dignified traveller, I should have put up with the stuffiness and darkness of the inn's one room, but I felt the recurrent hard-boiled eggs and puffed rice, with a certain steamed scone which contained more of the millstone and less of the flour than was usual even with the scones of the country, were trials enough without trying to be dignified in discomfort.

And while I had my meal everybody took it in turns to look through the finder of my camera, the women, small-footed, dirty creatures, much to the surprise of their menfolk, having precedence. Those women vowed they had never seen a foreigner before. Every one of them had bound feet,

tiny feet on which they could just totter, and all were clad in extremely dirty, much-patched blue cotton faded into a dingy dirt-colour. Most of them wore tight-fitting coverings of black cloth to cover their scalps, often evidently to conceal their baldness, for many of them suffered from "expending too much heart." Baldness is caused, say the Chinese half in fun, because the luckless man or woman has thought more of others than of themselves. I am afraid they do not believe it, or they may like to hide their good deeds, for they are anything but proud of being bald. Most of the mouths, too, here, and indeed all along the road, were badly formed and full of shockingly broken and decayed teeth, the women's particularly. Wheaten flour, which is the staple food of Shansi, is apparently not enough to make good teeth. The people were not of a markedly Mongolian type. Already it seemed as if the nations to the West were setting their seal upon them, and some of the younger girls, with thick black hair parted in the middle, a little colour in their cheeks, and somewhat pathetic, wistful-looking faces, would have been good-looking in any land.

Then I had one more good look at the river, my farthest point west on the journey, the river I had come so far to see. It was all so peaceful in the afternoon sunlight that it seemed foolish not to go on. The hills of Shensi beckoned and all my fears fell from me. I wanted badly to go on. Then came reason. It was madness to risk the *tufei's* with whom everyone was agreed Shensi swarmed. There in the brilliant sunshine, with the laughing people around me, I was not afraid, but when night fell—no, even if the soldiers would have allowed, which Mr Wang declared they would not—I dared not, and I turned sadly and regretfully and made my way back to Fen Chou Fu.

Had I gone on I should have arrived in Russia with the

war in full swing, so on the whole I am thankful I had to flee before the *tufes* of Shensi. Perhaps when the world is at peace I shall essay that fascinating journey again. Only I shall look out for some companion, and even if I take the matchless master of transport I shall most certainly see to it that I have a good cook.

CHAPTER VIII

LAST DAYS IN CHINA

WELL, I had failed ! The horrid word kept ringing in my ears, the still more horrid thought was ever in my mind day and night as I retraced my footsteps, and I come of a family that does not like to fail.

I wondered if it were possible to make my way along the great waterways of Siberia. There were mighty rivers there, I had seen them, little-known rivers, and it seemed to me that before going West again I might see something of them, and as my mules picked their way across the streams, along the stony paths, by the walled cities, through the busy little villages, already China was behind me, I was thinking of ways and means by which I might penetrate Siberia.

At Fen Chou Fu they were kind, but I knew they thought I had given in too easily, that I had turned back at a shadow, but at T'ai Yuan Fu I met the veteran missionary, Dr Edwards, and I was comforted and did not feel so markedly that failure was branded all over me when he thanked God that his letter had had the effect of making me consider carefully my ways, for of one thing he was sure, there would have been but one ending to the expedition. To get to Lan Chou Fu would have been impossible.

Still my mind was not quite at ease about the matter, and at intervals I wondered if I would not have gone on had I had a good cook. Rather a humiliating thought ! It was a satisfaction when one day I met Mr Reginald Farrer,

who had left Peking with Mr Purdom to botanise in Kansu ten days before I too had proposed to start West.

"I often wondered," said he, "what became of you and how you had got on. We thought perhaps you might have fallen into the hands of White Wolf and then——" He paused.

Shensi, he declared, was a seething mass of unrest. It would have spelled death to cross to those peaceful hills I had looked at from the left bank of the Hoang-Ho. We discussed our travels, and we took diametrically opposite views of China. But it is impossible to have everything: one has to choose, and I prefer the crudeness of the new world, the rush and the scramble and the progress, to the calm of the Oriental. Very likely this is because I am a woman. In the East woman holds a subservient position, she has no individuality of her own, and I, coming from the newest new world, where woman has a very high place indeed, is counted a citizen, and a useful citizen, could hardly be expected to admire a state of society where her whole life is a torture and her position is regulated by her value to the man to whom she belongs. I put this to my friend when he was admiring the Chinese ladies and he laughed.

"I admit," said he, "that a young woman has a"—well, he used a very strong expression, but it wasn't strong enough—"of a time when she is young, but, if she has a son, when her husband dies see what a position she holds. That little old woman sitting on a *k'ang* rules a whole community."

And then I gave it up because our points of view were East and West. But I am thankful that the Fates did not make me—a woman—a member of a nation where I could have no consideration, no chance of happiness, no great influence or power by my own effort, where recognition only



AVENUE OF TREES ALONG THE WAYSIDE.

See page 129.



STRAW BOARD DRYING.

See page 130.



TEMPLE AT TSUI SU.

See page 131.



TWISTED TREES IN TEMPLE GROUND.

See page 131.

came if I had borne a son who was still living and my husband was dead.

On my way back to T'ai Yuan Fu I stayed at no mission station except at Fen Chou Fu ; I went by a different route and spent the nights at miserable inns that kindly charged me a whole penny for lodging and allowed me to sleep in my litter in their yards, and about eighty *li* from Fen Chou Fu I came across evidences of another mission that would be *anathema maranatha* to the Nonconformists with whom I had been staying. It is curious this schism between two bodies holding what purports to be the same faith. I remember a missionary, the wife of a doctor at Ping Ting Chou, who belonged to a sect called The Brethren, who spoke of the Roman Catholics as if they were in as much need of conversion as the ignorant Chinese around her. It made me smile ; yet I strongly suspect that Mr Farrer will put me in the same category as I put my friend from Ping Ting Chou ! However, here under the care of the Alsatian Fathers the country was most beautifully cultivated. The wheat was growing tall and lush in the land, emerald-green in the May sunshine ; there were avenues of trees along the wayside clothed in the tender fresh green of spring, and I came upon a whole village, men and boys, busy making a bridge across a stream. Never in China have I seen such evidences of well-conducted agricultural industry ; and the Fathers were militant too, for they were, and probably are, armed, and in the Boxer trouble held their station like a fort, and any missionaries fleeing who reached them had their lives saved. I found much to commend in that Roman Catholic mission, and felt they were as useful to the country people in their way as were the Americans to the people of the towns.

Outside another little town the population seemed to be

given over to the making of strawboard, and great banks were plastered with squares of it set out to dry, and every here and there a man was engaged in putting more pieces up. It was rather a comical effect to see the side of a bank plastered with yellow squares of strawboard and the wheat springing on top.

All along the route still went caravans of camels, mules and donkeys, and, strangest of all modes of conveyance, wheel-barrows, heavily laden too. A wheel-barrow in China carries goods on each side of a great wheel, a man holds up the shafts and wheels it, usually with a strap round his shoulders, and in front either another man or a donkey is harnessed to help with the traction. Hundreds of miles they go, over the roughest way, and the labour must be very heavy; but wherever I went in China this was impressed upon me, that man was the least important factor in any work of production. He might be used till he failed and then thrown lightly away without a qualm. There were plenty glad enough to take his place.

I have been taken to task for comparing China to Babylon, but I must make some comparison to bring home things to my readers. This journey through the country in the warm spring sunshine was as unlike a journey anywhere that I have been in Europe, Africa or Australia as anything could possibly be. It was through an old land, old when Europe was young. I stopped at inns that were the disgusting product of the slums; I passed men working in the fields who were survivals of an old civilisation, and when I passed any house that was not a hovel it was secluded carefully, so that the owner and his womenkind might keep themselves apart from the proletariat, the serfs who laboured around them and for them.

Within a day's journey of T'ai Yuan Fu I came to a little

town, Tsui Su, where there was an extra vile inn with no courtyard that I could sleep in, only a room where the rats were numerous and so fierce that they drove Buchanan for refuge to my bed and the objectionable insects that I hustled off the *k'ang* by means of powdered borax and Keating's, strewed over and under the ground sheet, crawled up the walls and dropped down upon me from the ceiling. Poor Buchanan and I spent a horrid night. I don't like rats anyway, and fierce and hungry rats on the spot are far worse for keeping off sleep than possible robbers in the future. All that night I dozed and waked and restrained Buchanan's energies and vowed I was a fool for coming to China, and then in the morning as usual I walked it all back, and was glad, for Mr Wang came to me and, after the best personally conducted Cook's tourist style, explained that here was a temple which "mus' see."

I didn't believe much in temples in these parts, but I went a little way back into the town and came to a really wonderful temple, built, I think, over nine warm springs—the sort of thing that weighed down the scales heavily on Mr Farrer's side. What has a nation that could produce such a temple to learn from the West? I shall never forget the carved dragons in red and gold that climbed the pillars at the principal entrance, the twisted trees, the shrines over the springs and the bronze figures that stood guard on the platform at the entrance gate. The steps up to that gate were worn and broken with the passing of many feet through countless years; the yellow tiles of the roof were falling and broken; from the figures had been torn or had fallen the arms that they once had borne; the whole place was typical of the decay which China allows to fall upon her holy places; but seen in the glamour of the early morning, with the grass springing underfoot, the trees in full leaf, the sunshine

lighting the yellow roofs and the tender green of the trees, it was gorgeous. Then the clouds gathered and it began to rain, gentle, soft, warm, growing rain, and I left it shrouded in a seductive grey mist that veiled its imperfections and left me a memory only of one of the beautiful places of the earth that I am glad I have seen.

At T'ai Yuan Fu I paid Mr Wang's fare back to Pao Ting Fu and bade him a glad farewell. There may be worse interpreters in China, but I really hope there are not many. He would have been a futile person in any country; he was a helpless product of age-old China. I believe he did get back safely, but I must confess to feeling on sending him away much as I should do were I to turn loose a baby of four to find his way across London. Indeed I have met many babies of four in Australia who struck me as being far more capable than the interpreter who had undertaken to see me across China.

I was on the loose myself now. I was bent on going to Siberia; but the matter had to be arranged in my own mind first, and while I did so I lingered and spent a day or two at Hwailu; not that I wanted to see that town—somehow I had done with China—but because the personality of Mr and Mrs Green of the China Inland Mission interested me.

Hwailu is a small walled city, exactly like hundreds of other little walled cities, with walls four-square to each point of the compass, and it is set where the hills begin to rise that divide Chihli from Shansi, and beyond the mission station is a square hill called Nursing Calf Fort. The hill has steep sides up which it is almost impossible to take any animal, but there are about one hundred acres of arable land on top, and this, with true Chinese thrift, could not be allowed to go untilld, so the story goes that while a calf was young a man carried it up on his back; there it grew

to maturity, and with its help they ploughed the land and they reaped the crops. It is a truly Chinese story, and very likely it is true. It is exactly what the Chinese would do.

At Hwailu, where they had lived for many years, Mr and Mrs Green were engaged in putting up a new church, and with them I came in contact with missionaries who had actually suffered almost to death at the hands of the Boxers. It was thrilling to listen to the tales of their sufferings, sitting there on the verandah of the mission house looking out on to the peaceful flowers and shrubs of the mission garden.

When the Boxer trouble spread to Hwailu and it was manifest the mission house was no longer safe, they took refuge in a cave among the hills that surround the town. Their converts and friends—for they had many friends who were not converts—hardly dared come near them, and death was very close. It was damp and cold in the cave though it was summer-time, and by and by they had eaten all their food and drunk all their water, and their hearts were heavy, for they feared not only for themselves, but for what the little children must suffer.

“I could not help it,” said Mrs Green, reproaching herself for being human. “I used to look at my children and wonder how the saints *could* rejoice in martyrdom!”

When they were in despair and thinking of coming out and giving themselves up they heard hushed voices, and a hand at the opening of the cave offered five large wheaten scones. Some friends, again not converts, merely pagan friends, had remembered their sufferings. Still they looked at the scones doubtfully, and though the little children—they were only four and six—held out their hands for them eagerly, they were obliged to implore them not to eat them, they would make them so desperately thirsty. But their

Chinese friends were thoughtful as well as kind, and presently came the same soft voice again and a hand sending up a basketful of luscious cucumbers, cool and refreshing with their store of water.

But they could not stay there for ever, and finally they made their way down to the river bank, the Ching River—the Clear River we called it, and I have also heard it translated the Dark Blue River, though it was neither dark, nor blue, nor clear, simply a muddy canal—and slowly made their way in the direction of Tientsin, hundreds of miles away. That story of the devoted little band's wanderings makes pitiful reading. Sometimes they went by boat, sometimes they crept along in the kaoliang and reeds, and at last they arrived at the outskirts of Hsi An—not the great city in Shensi, but a small walled town on the Ching River in Chihli. Western cities are as common in China as new towns in English-speaking lands—and here they, hearing a band was after them, hid themselves in the kaoliang, the grain that grows close and tall as a man. They were weary and worn and starved; they were well-nigh hopeless—at least I should have been hopeless—but still their faith upheld them. It was the height of summer and the sun poured down his rays, but towards evening the clouds gathered. If it rained they knew with little children they must leave their refuge.

“But surely, I know,” said Mrs Green, “the dear Lord will never let it rain.”

And as I looked at her I seemed to see the passionate yearning with which she looked at the little children that the rain must doom to a Chinese prison or worse. In among those thick kaoliang stalks they could not stay.

It rained, the heavy rain that comes in the Chinese summer, and the fugitives crept out and gave themselves up.

"It shows how ignorant we are, how unfit to judge for ourselves," said the teller of the tale fervently, "for we fell into the hands of a comparatively merciful band, whereas presently the kaoliang was beaten by a ruthless set of men whom there would have been no escaping, and who certainly would have killed us."

But the tenderness of the most merciful band was a thing to be prayed against. They carried the children kindly enough—the worst of Chinamen seem to be good to children—but they constantly threatened their elders with death. They were going to their death, that they made very clear to them; and they slung them on poles by their hands and feet, and the pins came out of the women's long hair—there was another teacher, a girl, with them—and it trailed in the dust of the filthy Chinese paths. And Mr Green was faint and weary from a wound in his neck, but still they had no pity.

Still these devoted people comforted each other. It was the will of the Lord. Always was He with them. They were taken to Pao Ting Fu, Pao Ting Fu that had just burned its own missionaries, and put in the gaol there—and, knowing a Chinese inn, I wonder what can be the awfulness of a Chinese gaol—and they were allowed no privacy. Mrs Green had dysentery; they had not even a change of clothes; but the soldiers were always in the rooms with them, or at any rate in the outer room, and this was done, of course, of *malice prepense*, for no one values the privacy of their women more than the Chinese. The girl got permission to go down to the river to wash their clothes, but a soldier always accompanied her, and always the crowds jeered and taunted as she went along in the glaring sunshine, feeling that nothing was hidden from these scornful people. Only strangely to the children were they kind; the soldiers used to

give them copper coins so that they might buy little scones and cakes to eke out the scanty rations, and once—it brought home to me, perhaps as nothing else could, the deprivations of such a life—instead of buying the much-needed food the women bought a whole pennyworth of hairpins, for their long hair was about their shoulders, and though they brushed it to the best of their ability with their hands it was to them an unseemly thing.

And before the order came—everything is ordered in China—that their lives were to be saved and they were to be sent to Tientsin the little maid who had done so much to cheer and alleviate their hard lot lay dying; the hardships and the coarse food had been too much for her. In the filth and misery of the ghastly Chinese prison she lay, and, bending over her, they picked the lice off her. Think of that, ye folk who guard your little ones tenderly and love them as these missionaries who feel called upon to convert the Chinese loved theirs.

After all that suffering they went back, back to Hwailu and the desolated mission station under the Nursing Calf Fort, where they continue their work to this day, and so will continue it, I suppose, to the end, for most surely their sufferings and their endurance have fitted them for the work they have at heart as no one who has not so suffered and endured could be fitted. And so I think the whirligig of Time brings in his revenges.

I walked through a tremendous dust-storm to the railway station at the other side of the town, and the woman who had suffered these awful things, and who was as sweet and charming and lovable a woman as I have ever met, walked with me and bade me God-speed on my journey, and when I parted from her I knew that among a class I—till I came to China—had always strenuously opposed I had found one

whom I could not only respect, but whom I could love and admire.

Going back to Pao Ting Fu was like going back to old friends. They had not received my letter. Mr Wang had not made his appearance, so when James Buchanan and I, attended by the master of transport, appeared upon the scene on a hot summer day we found the missionary party having their midday dinner on the verandah, and they received me—bless their kind hearts!—with open arms, and proceeded to explain to me how very wise a thing I had done in coming back. The moment I had left, they said, they had been uncomfortable in the part they had taken in forwarding me on my journey.

It was very good of them. There are days we always remember all our lives—our wedding day and such-like—and that coming back on the warm summer's day out of the hot, dusty streets of the western suburb into the cool, clean, tree-shaded compound of the American missionaries at Pao Ting Fu is one of them. And that compound is one of the places in the world I much want to visit again.

There is another day, too, I shall not lightly forget. We called it the last meeting of the Travellers' Club of Pao Ting Fu. There were only two members in the club, Mr Long and I and an honorary member, James Buchanan, and on this day the club decided to meet, and Mr Long asked me to dinner. He lived in the Chinese college in the northern suburb. His house was only about two miles away and it could be reached generally by going round by the farms and graves, mostly graves, that cover the ground by the rounded north-west corner of the wall of the city. Outside a city in China is ugly. True, the walls are strangely old-world and the moat is a relic of the past—useful in these modern times for disposing of unwanted puppies; Pao

Ting Fu never seemed so hard up for food as Shansi—but otherwise the ground looks much as the deserted alluvial goldfields round Ballarat used to look in the days of my youth; the houses are ramshackle to the last degree, and all the fields, even when they are green with the growing grain, look unfinished. But round the north-west corner of Pao Ting Fu the graves predominate. There are thousands and thousands of them. And on that particular day it rained, it rained, and it rained, steady warm summer rain that only stopped and left the air fresh and washed about six o'clock in the evening. I ordered a rickshaw—a rickshaw in Pao Ting Fu is a very primitive conveyance; but it was pleasantly warm, and, with James Buchanan on my knee, in the last evening dress that remained to me and an embroidered Chinese jacket for an opera cloak, I set out. I had started early because on account of the rain the missionaries opined there might be a little difficulty with the roads. However, I did not worry much because I only had two miles to go, and I had walked it often in less than three-quarters of an hour. I was a little surprised when my rickshaw man elected to go through the town, but, as I could not speak the language, I was not in a position to remonstrate, and I knew we could not come back that way as at sundown all the gates shut save the western, and that only waits till the last train at nine o'clock.

It was muddy, red, clayey mud in the western suburb when we started, but when we got into the northern part of the town I was reminded of the tribulations of Fen Chou Fu in the summer rains, for the water was up to our axles, the whole place was like a lake and the people were piling up dripping goods to get them out of the way of the very dirty flood. My man only paused to turn his trousers up round his thighs and then went on again—going through

floods was apparently all in the contract—but we went very slowly indeed. Dinner was not until eight and I had given myself plenty of time, but I began to wonder whether we should arrive at that hour. Presently I knew we shouldn't.

We went through the northern gate, and to my dismay the country in the fading light seemed under water. From side to side and far beyond the road was covered, and what those waters hid I trembled to think, for a road at any time in China is a doubtful proposition and by no means spells security. As likely as not there were deep holes in it. But apparently my coolie had no misgivings. In he went at his usual snail's pace and the water swirled up to the axles, up to the floor of the rickshaw, and when I had gathered my feet up on the seat and we were in the middle of the sheet of exceedingly dirty water the rickshaw coolie stopped and gave me to understand that he had done his darnedest and could do no more. He dropped the shafts and stood a little way off, wringing the water out of his garments. It wasn't dangerous, of course, but it was distinctly uncomfortable. I saw myself in evening dress wading through two feet of dirty water to a clayey, slippery bank at the side. I waited a little because the prospect did not please me, and though there were plenty of houses round, there was not a soul in sight. It was getting dark too, and it was after eight o'clock.

Presently a figure materialised on that clayey bank and him I beckoned vehemently.

Now Pao Ting Fu had seen foreigners, not many, but still foreigners, and they spell to it a little extra cash, so the gentleman on the bank tucked up his garments and came wading over. He and my original friend took a maddeningly long time discussing the situation, and then they proceeded to drag the rickshaw sideways to the bank. There

was a narrow pathway along the top and they apparently decided that if they could get the conveyance up there we might proceed on our journey. First I had to step out, and it looked slippery enough to make me a little doubtful. As a preliminary I handed James Buchanan to the stranger, because, as he had to sit on my knee, I did not want him to get dirtier than necessary. Buchanan did not like the stranger, but he submitted with a bad grace till I, stepping out, slipped on the clay and fell flat on my back, when he promptly bit the man who was holding him and, getting away, expressed his sympathy by licking my face. Such a commotion as there was! My two men yelled in dismay. Buchanan barked furiously, and I had some ado to get on my feet again, for the path was very slippery. It was long past eight now and could I have gone back I would have done so, but clearly that was impossible, so by signs I engaged No. 2 man, whose wounds had to be salved—copper did it—to push behind, and we resumed our way.

Briefly it was long after ten o'clock when I arrived at the college. My host had given me up as a bad job long before and, not being well, had gone to bed. There was nothing for it but to rouse him up, because I wanted to explain that I thought I had better have another man to take me home over the still worse road that I knew ran outside the city.

He made me most heartily welcome and then explained to my dismay that the men utterly declined to go any farther, declared no rickshaw could get over the road to the western suburb and that I must have a cart. That was all very well, but where was I to get a cart at that time of night, with the city gates shut?

Mr Long explained that his servant was a wise and resourceful man and would probably get one if I would come in and have dinner. So the two members of the Travellers'

Club sat down to an excellent dinner—a Chinese cook doesn't spoil a dinner because you are two hours late—and we tried to take a flash-light photograph of the entertainment. Alas! I was not fortunate that day; something went wrong with the magnesium light and we burnt up most things. However, we ourselves were all right, and at two o'clock in the morning Mr Long's servant's uncle, or cousin, or some relative, arrived with a Peking cart and a good substantial mule. I confess I was a bit doubtful about the journey home because I knew the state of repair, or rather disrepair, of a couple of bridges we had to cross, but they were negotiated, and just as the dawn was beginning to break I arrived at the mission compound and rewarded the adventurous men who had had charge of me with what seemed to them much silver and to me very little. I have been to many dinners in my life, but the last meeting of the Travellers' Club at Pao Ting Fu remains engraved on my memory.

Yet a little longer I waited in Pao Ting Fu before starting on my Siberian trip, for the start was to be made from Tientsin and the missionaries were going there in house-boats. They were bound for Pei Ta Ho for their summer holiday and the first stage of the journey was down the Ching River to Tientsin. I thought it would be rather a pleasant way of getting over the country, and it would be pleasant too to have company. I am not enamoured of my own society; I can manage alone, but company certainly has great charms.

So I waited, and while I waited I bought curios.

In Pao Ting Fu in the revolution there was a great deal of looting done, and when order reigned again it was as much as a man's life was worth to try and dispose of any of his loot. A foreigner who would take the things right out of the country was a perfect godsend, and once it was known I was buying, men waited for me the livelong day, and I only

had to put my nose outside the house to be pounced upon by a would-be seller. I have had as many as nine men selling at once; they enlisted the servants, and china ranged round the kitchen floor, and embroideries, brass and mirrors were stowed away in the pantry. Indeed I and my followers must have been an awful nuisance to the missionaries. They knew no English, but as I could count a little in Chinese, when we could not get an interpreter we managed; and I expect I bought an immense amount of rubbish, but never in my life have I had greater satisfaction in spending money. More than ever was I pleased when I unpacked in England, and I have been pleased ever since.

Those sellers were persistent. They said in effect that never before had they had such a chance and they were going to make the best of it. We engaged house-boats for our transit; we went down to those boats, we pushed off from the shore, and even then there were sellers bent on making the best of their last chance. I bought there on the boat a royal blue vase for two dollars and a quaint old brass mirror in a carved wooden frame also for two dollars, and then the boatmen cleared off the merchants and we started.

I expect on the banks of the Euphrates or the Tigris in the days before the dawn of history men went backwards and forwards in boats like these we embarked in on the little river just outside the south gate of Pao Ting Fu. We had three boats. Dr and Mrs Lewis and their children had the largest, with their servants, and we all made arrangements to mess on board their boat. Miss Newton and a friend had another, with more of the servants, and I, like a millionaire, had one all to myself. I had parted with the master of transport at Pao Ting Fu, but Hsu Sen, one of the Lewis's servants, waited upon me and made up my bed in the open

part of the boat under a little roof. The cabins were behind, low little places like rabbit hutches, with little windows and little doors through which I could get by going down on my knees. I used them only for my luggage, so was enabled to offer a passage to a sewing-woman who would be exceedingly useful to the missionaries. She had had her feet bound in her youth and was rather crippled in consequence, and she bought her own food, as I bought my water, at the wayside places as we passed. She was a foolish soul, like most Chinese women, and took great interest in Buchanan, offering him always a share of her own meals, which consisted apparently largely of cucumbers and the tasteless Chinese melon. Now James Buchanan was extremely polite, always accepting what was offered him, but he could not possibly eat cucumber and melon, and when I went to bed at night I often came in contact with something cold and clammy which invariably turned out to be fragments of the sewing-woman's meals bestowed upon my courtly little dog. I forgave him because of his good manners. There really was nowhere else to hide them.

They were pleasant days we spent meandering down the river. We passed by little farms; we passed by villages, by fishing traps, by walled cities. Hsi An Fu, with the water of the river flowing at the foot of its castellated walls, was like a city of romance, and when we came upon little market-places by the water's edge the romance deepened, for we knew then how the people lived. Sometimes we paused and bought provisions; sometimes we got out and strolled along the banks in the pleasant summer weather. Never have I gone a more delightful or more unique voyage. And at last we arrived at Tientsin and I parted from my friends, and they went on to Pei Ta Ho and I to Astor House to prepare for my journey east and north.

And so I left China, China where I had dwelt for sixteen months, China that has been civilised so long and is a world apart, and now I sit in my comfortable sitting-room in England and read what the papers say of China ; and the China I know and the China of the newspapers is quite a different place. It is another world. China has come into the war. On our side, of course : the Chinaman is far too astute to meddle with a losing cause. But, after all, what do the peasants of Chihli and the cave-dwellers in the *yaos* of Shansi know about a world's war ? The very, very small section that rules China manages these affairs, and the mass of the population are exactly as they were in the days of the Cæsars, or before the first dynasty in Egypt for that matter.

"China," said one day to me a man who knew it well commercially, just before I left, "was never in so promising a condition. All the taxes are coming in and money was never so easy to get."

"There was a row over the new tax," said a missionary sadly, in the part I know well, "in a little village beyond there. The village attacked the tax-collectors and the soldiers fell upon the villagers and thirteen men were killed. Oh, I know they say it is only nominal, but what is merely nominal to outsiders is their all to these poor villagers. They must pay the tax and starve, or resist and be killed."

He did not say they were between the devil and the deep sea, because he was a missionary, but I said it for him, and there were two cases like that which came within my ken during my last month in China.

The fact of the matter is, I suppose, that outsiders can only judge generally, and China is true to type, the individual has never counted there and he does not count yet. What are a few thousand unpaid soldiers revolting in Kalgan ? What a robber desolating Kansu ? A score or two of



ENTRANCE TO TEMPLE TSUI SU.
See page 131.



BRONZE FIGURE AT ENTRANCE TO TEMPLE.
See page 131.



GATEWAY TO THE TEMPLE OF HOT SPRINGS.
See page 131.



MISSION GARDEN AT HWAILU.

See page 133.

villagers killed because they could not pay a tax? Absolutely nothing in the general crowd. I, being a woman, and a woman from the new nations of the south, cannot help feeling, and feeling strongly, the individual ought to count, that no nation can be really prosperous until the individual with but few exceptions is well-to-do and happy. I should like to rule out the "few exceptions," but that would be asking too much of this present world. At least I like to think that most people have a chance of happiness, but I feel in China that not a tenth of the population has that.

China left a curious impression upon my mind. The people are courteous and kindly, far more courteous than would be the same class of people in England, and yet I came back from the interior with a strong feeling that it is unsafe, not because of the general hostility of the people—they are not hostile—but because suffering and life count for so little. They themselves suffer and die by the thousand.

"What! Bring a daughter-in-law to see the doctor in the middle of the harvest! Impossible!" And yet they knew she was suffering agony, that seeing the doctor was her only chance of sight! But she did not get it. They were harvesting and no one could be spared!

What is the life then of a foreign barbarian more or less? These courteous, kindly, dirty folk who look upon one as a menagerie would look on with equal interest at one's death. They might stretch out a hand to help, just as a man in England might stop another from ill-treating a horse, though for one who would put himself out two would pass by with a shrug of the shoulders and a feeling that it was no business of theirs. Every day of their lives the majority look upon the suffering of their women and think nothing of it. The desire of the average man is to have a wife who has so suffered. I do not know whether the keeping of the women

in a state of subserviency has reacted upon the nation at large, but I should think it has hampered it beyond words. Nothing—nothing made me so ardent a believer in the rights of women as my visit to China.

“Women in England,” said a man to me the other day, a foreigner, one of our Allies, “deserve the vote, but the Continental women are babies. They cannot have it.” So are the Chinese women babies, very helpless babies indeed, and I feel, and feel very strongly indeed, that until China educates her women, makes them an efficient half of the nation, not merely man’s toy and his slave, China will always lag behind in the world’s progress.

Already China is split up into “spheres of influence.” Whether she likes it or not, she must realise that Russian misrule is paramount in the great steppes of the north; Japan rules to a great extent in the north-east, her railway from Mukden to Chang Ch’un is a model of efficiency; Britain counts her influence as the most important along the valley of the Yang Tze Kiang, and France has some say in Yunnan. I cannot help thinking that it would be a great day for China, for the welfare of her toiling millions, millions toiling without hope, if she were partitioned up among the stable nations of the earth—that is to say, between Japan, Britain and France. And having said so much, I refer my readers to Mr Farrer for the other point of view. It is diametrically opposed to mine.

CHAPTER IX

KHARBIN AND VLADIVOSTOK

AT Tientsin I sweltered in the Astor House, and I put it on record that I found it hotter in Northern China than I did on the Guinea coast in West Africa. It was probably, of course, the conditions under which I lived, for the hotel had been so well arranged for the bitter winter it was impossible to get a thorough draught of air through any of the rooms. James Buchanan did not like it either, for in the British concessions in China dogs come under suspicion of hydrophobia and have always to be on the leash, wherefore, of course, I had to take the poor little chap out into the Chinese quarter before he could have a proper run, and he spent a great deal more time shut up in my bedroom than he or I liked.

But Tientsin was a place apart, not exactly Chinese as I know China—certainly not Europe; it remains in my mind as a place where Chinese art learns to accommodate itself to European needs. All the nations of the world East and West meet there: in the British quarter were the Sikhs and other Indian nationalities, and in the French the streets were kept by Anamites in quaint peaked straw hats. I loved those streets of Tientsin that made me feel so safe and yet gave me a delightful feeling of adventure—adventure that cost me nothing; and I always knew I could go and dine with a friend or come back and exchange ideas with somebody who spoke my own tongue. But Tientsin wasn't any good to me as a traveller. It has been written about for the last sixty years or more. I went on.

One night Buchanan and I, without a servant—we missed the servant we always had in China—wended our way down to the railway station and ensconced ourselves in a first-class carriage bound for Mukden. The train didn't start till some ungodly hour of the night, but as it was in the station I got permission to take my place early, and with rugs and cushions made myself comfortable and was sound asleep long before we started. When I wakened I was well on the way to my destination.

I made friends with a British officer of Marines who, with his sister, was coming back across Russia. He had been learning Japanese, and I corrected another wrong impression. The British do sometimes learn a language other than their own. At Mukden we dined and had a bath. I find henceforth that all my stopping-places are punctuated by baths, or by the fact that a bath was not procurable. A night and day in the train made one desirable at Mukden, and a hotel run by capable Japanese made it a delight. The Japanese, as far as I could see, run Manchuria; must be more powerful than ever now Russia is out of it; Kharbin is Russian, Mukden Japanese. The train from there to Chang Ch'un is Japanese, and we all travelled in a large open carriage, clean and, considering how packed it was, fairly airy. There was room for everybody to lie down, just room, and the efficient Japanese parted me from my treasured James Buchanan and put him, howling miserably, into a big box—rather a dirty box; I suppose they don't think much of animals—in another compartment. I climbed over much luggage and crawled under a good deal more to see that all was right with him, and the Japanese guards looked upon me as a mild sort of lunatic and smiled contemptuously. I don't like being looked upon with contempt by Orientals, so I was a little ruffled when I came back to my own seat. Then I was amused.

Naturally among such a crowd I made no attempt to undress for the night, merely contenting myself with taking off my boots. But the man next me, a Japanese naval officer, with whom I conversed in French, had quite different views. My French was rather bad and so was his in a different way, so we did not get on very fast. I fear I left him with the impression that I was an Austrian, for he never seemed to have heard of Australia. However, we showed each other our good will. Then he proceeded to undress. Never have I seen the process more nattily accomplished. How he slipped out of blue cloth and gold lace into a kimono I'm sure I don't know, though he did it under my very eyes, and then, with praiseworthy forethought, he took the links and studs out of his shirt and put them into a clean one ready for the morrow, stowed them both away in his little trunk, settled himself down on his couch and gave himself up to a cigarette and conversation. I smoked too—one of his cigarettes—and we both went to sleep amicably, and with the morning we arrived at Chang Ch'un, and poor little Buchanan made the welkin ring when he saw me and found himself caged in a barred box. However that was soon settled, and he told me how infinitely preferable from a dog's point of view are the free and easy trains of Russia and China to the well-managed ones of Japan.

These towns on the great railway are weird little places, merely scattered houses and wide roads leading out into the great plain, and the railway comes out of the distance and goes away into the distance. And the people who inhabit them seem to be a conglomeration of nations, perhaps the residuum of all the nations. Here the marine officer and his sister and I fell into the hands of a strange-looking individual who might have been a cross between a Russian Pole and a Chinaman, with a dash of Korean thrown in, and

he undertook to take us to a better hotel than that usually frequented by visitors to Chang Ch'un. I confess I wonder what sort of people do visit Chang Ch'un, not the British tourist as a rule, and if the principal hotel is worse than the ramshackle place where we had breakfast, it must be bad. Still it was pleasant in the brilliant warm sunshine, even though it was lucky we had bathed the night before at Mukden, for the best they could do here was to show us into the most primitive of bedrooms, the very first effort in the way of a bedroom, I should think, after people had given up *k'angs*, and there I met a very small portion of water in a very small basin alongside an exceedingly frowsy bed and made an effort to wash away the stains of a night's travel. Now such a beginning to the day would effectually disgust me; then, fresh from the discomforts of Chinese travel, I found it all in the day's work.

I found too that I had made a mistake and not brought enough money with me. Before I had paid for Buchanan's ticket I had parted with every penny I possessed and could not possibly get any more till I arrived at the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank at Kharbin. I am rather given to a mistake of that sort; I always feel my money is so much safer in the bank's charge than in mine.

We went on through fertile Manchuria and I saw the rich fields that coming out I had passed over at night. This train was Russian, and presently there came along a soldier, a forerunner of an officer inspecting passengers and carriages. Promptly his eye fell on Buchanan, who was taking an intelligent interest in the scenery—he always insisted on looking out of the window—and I, seeing he, the soldier, was troubled, tried to tell him my intentions were good and I would pay at Kharbin; but I don't think I made myself understood, for he looked wildly round the compartment, seized the little

dog, pushed him in a corner and threw a cushion over him. Both Buchanan and I were so surprised we kept quite still, and the Russian officer looked in, saw a solitary woman holding out her ticket and passed on, and not till he was well out of the way did James Buchanan, who was a jewel, poke up his pretty little head and make a few remarks upon the enormity of smuggling little dogs without paying their fares, which was evidently what I was doing.

We arrived at Kharbin about nine o'clock at night, and as I stepped out on to a platform, where all the nations of the earth, in dirty clothes, seemed yelling in chorus, a man came along and spoke to me in English. The soldier who had aided and abetted in the smuggling of Buchanan was standing beside me, evidently expecting some little remembrance, and I was meditating borrowing from the officer of Marines, though, as they were going on and I was not, I did not much like it. And the voice in English asked did I want a hotel. I did, of course. The man said he was the courier of the Grand Hotel, but he had a little place of his own which was much better and he could make me very comfortable. Then I explained I could not get any money till the bank opened next day and he spread out his hands as a Chinaman might have done. "No matter, no matter," he would pay, his purse was mine.

Would I go to his house ?

Could I do anything else under the circumstances ? And I promptly took him at his word and asked for a rouble—Kharbin is China, but the rouble was the current coin—and paid off the soldier for his services. I bade farewell to my friends and in a ramshackle droshky went away through the streets of Kharbin, and we drove so far I wondered if I had done wisely. I had, as it turned out.

But I heard afterwards that even in those days anything

might have happened in Kharbin, where the population consists of Japanese and Chinese and Russians and an evil combination of all three, to say nothing of a sprinkling of rascals from all the nations of the earth.

"There is not," said a man who knew it well, "a decent Chinaman in the whole place."

In fact to all intents and purposes it is Russian. There were Russian students all in uniform in the streets, and bearded, belted drivers drove the droszkies with their extra horse in a trace beside the shafts, just as they did in Russia. Anyhow it seems to me the sins of Kharbin would be the vigorous primal sins of Russia, not the decadent sins of old-world China.

Kharbin when I was there in 1914 had 60,000 inhabitants and 25,000 Russian soldiers guarding the railway in the district. The Russian police forbade me to take photographs, and you might take your choice: Chinese *hung hu tzes* or Russian brigands would rob and slay you on your very doorstep in the heart of the town. At least they would in 1914, and things are probably worse now. All the signs are in Russian and, after the Chinese, looked to me at first as if I should be able to understand them, but closer inspection convinced me that the letters, though I knew their shape, had been out all night and were coming home in not quite the condition we would wish them to be. There is a Chinese town without a wall a little way over the plain—like all other Chinese towns, a place of dirt and smells—and there is a great river, the Sungari, a tributary of the Amur, on which I first met the magnificent river steamers of these parts. Badly I wanted to photograph them, but the Russian police said "No, no," I would have to get a permit from the colonel in command before that could be allowed, and the colonel in command was away and was not expected back

till the middle of next week, by which time I expected to be in Vladivostok, if not in Kharbarosvk, for Kharbin was hardly inviting as a place of sojourn for a traveller. Mr Poland, as he called himself, did his best for me. He gave me a fairly large room with a bed in it, a chair, a table and a broken-down wardrobe that would not open. He had the family washing cleared out of the bath, so that I bathed amidst the fluttering damp garments of his numerous progeny, but still there was a bath and a bath heater that with a certain expenditure of wood could be made to produce hot water; and if it was rather a terrifying machine to be locked up with at close quarters, still it did aid me to arrive at a certain degree of cleanliness, and I had been long enough in China not to be carping.

But it is dull eating in your bedroom, and I knew I had not done wisely, for even if the principal hotel had been uncomfortable—I am not saying it was, because I never went there—it would have been more amusing to watch other folks than to be alone.

The day after I arrived I called upon Mr Sly, the British consul, and I was amused to hear the very dubious sounds that came from his room when I was announced.

I cleared the air by saying hastily: "I'm not a distressed British subject and I don't want any money," though I'm bound to say he looked kind enough to provide me with the wherewithal had I wanted it. Then he shook his head and expressed his disapproval of my method of arrival.

"The last man who fell into Kharbin like that," said he, "I hunted for a week, and two days later I attended his funeral," so badly had he been man-handled. But that man, it seems, had plenty of money; it was wisdom he lacked. My trouble was the other way, certainly as far as money was concerned. It would never have been worth anyone's

while to harm me for the sake of my possessions. I had fallen into the hands of a Polish Jew named Polonetzky, though he called himself Poland to me, feeling, I suppose, my English tongue was not equal to the more complicated word, and he dwelt in the Dome Stratkorskaya—remember Kharbin is China—and I promised if he dealt well by me that I would recommend his boarding-house to all my friends bound for Kharbin. He did deal well by me. So frightened was he about me that he would not let me out of his sight, or if he were not in attendance his wife or his brother was turned on to look after me.

“I am very good friends,” said he, “with Mr Sly at present. I do not want anything to happen.”

Mr Sly, we found, knew one of my brothers and he very kindly asked me to dinner. That introduced me to the élite of the place, and after dinner—Chinese cooks are still excellent on the borders—we drove in his private carriage and ended the evening in the public gardens. The coachmen here are quite gorgeous affairs; no matter what their nondescript nationality—they are generally Russians, I think, though I have seen Chinamen, Tartars, driving like Jehu the son of Nimshi—they wear for full livery grey beaver hats with curly brims like Johnny Walker or the Corinthians in the days of the Regent. It took my breath away when I found myself bowling along behind two of these curly brimmed hats that I thought had passed away in the days of my grandfather.

The gardens at Kharbin are a great institution. There in the summer's evening the paths were all lined with lamps; there were open-air restaurants; there were bands and fluttering flags; there were the most excellent ices and insidious drinks of all descriptions, and there were crowds of gaily dressed people—Monte Carlo in the heart of Central

Asia ! Kharbin in the summer is hot, very hot, and Kharbin in the winter is bitter cold. It is all ice and snow and has a temperature that ranges somewhere down to 40° Fahrenheit below zero, and this though the sun shines brilliantly. It is insidious cold that sneaks on you and takes you unawares, not like the bleak raw cold of England that makes the very most of itself. They told me a tale of a girl who had gone skating and when she came off the ice found that her feet were frozen, though she was unaware of her danger and had thought them all right. Dogs are often frozen in the streets and Chinamen too, for the Chinaman has a way of going to sleep in odd places, and many a one has slept his last sleep in the winter streets of Kharbin—the wide straggling streets with houses and gardens and vacant spaces just like the towns of Australia. A frontier town it is in effect. We have got beyond the teeming population of China.

And then I prepared to go first east to Vladivostok and then north to Siberia, and I asked advice of both the British consul and my self-appointed courier, Mr Poland.

Certainly he took care of me, and the day before I started east he handed me over to his wife and suggested she should take me to the market and buy necessities for my journey. It was only a little over twenty-four hours so it did not seem to me a matter of much consequence, but I felt it would be interesting to walk through the market. It was.

This class of market, I find, is very much alike all over the world because they sell the necessities of life to the people and it is only varied by the difference of the local products. Kharbin market was a series of great sheds, and though most of the stalls were kept by Chinamen, it differed from a market in a Chinese town in the fact that huge quantities of butter and cheese and cream were for sale. Your true Chinaman is shocked at the European taste for milk and butter and

cream. He thinks it loathsome, and many a man is unable to sit at table and watch people eat these delicacies. Just as, of course, he is shocked at the taste that would put before a diner a huge joint of beef or mutton. These things Chinese refinement disguises. I suspect the proletariat with whom I came in contact in Shansi would gladly eat anything, but I speak of the refined Chinaman. Here in this market, whether he was refined or not, he had got over these fancies and there was much butter and delicious soured cream for sale. My Polish Jewess and I laboured under the usual difficulty of language, but she made me understand I had better buy a basket for my provisions, a plate, a knife, a fork—I had left these things behind in China, not thinking I should want them—a tumbler and a couple of kettles. No self-respecting person, according to her, would dream of travelling in Siberia without at least a couple of kettles. I laid in two of blue enamel ware and I am bound to say I blessed her forethought many and many a time.

Then we proceeded to buy provisions, and here I lost my way. She engaged a stray Chinaman, at least I think he was a Chinaman, with a dash of the gorilla in him, to carry the goods, and I thought she was provisioning her family against a siege or that perhaps there was only one market a month in Kharbin. Anyhow I did not feel called upon to interfere. It didn't seem any concern of mine and she had a large little family. We bought bread in large quantities, ten cucumbers, two pounds of butter, two pounds of cream—for these we bought earthenware jars—two dozen bananas, ten eggs and two pounds of tea. And then I discovered these were the provisions for my journey to Vladivostok, twenty-seven hours away! I never quite knew why I bought provisions at all, for the train stopped at stations where there were restaurants even though there was no restaurant

car attached to it. Mr Sly warned me to travel first class and I had had no thought of doing aught else, for travelling is very cheap and very good in Russia, but Mr Poland thought differently.

"I arrange," said he, "I arrange, and you see if you are not comfortable."

I am bound to say I was, very comfortable, for Buchanan and I had a very nice second-class carriage all to ourselves. At every station a conductor appeared to know if I wanted boiling water, and we had any amount of good things to eat; for the ten eggs had been hard boiled by Mrs "Poland," and the bread and butter and cream and cucumbers and bananas were as good as ever I have tasted. I also had two pounds of loaf sugar, German beet, I think, and some lemons.

And so we went east through the wooded hills of Manchuria. They were covered with lush grass restfully green, and there were flowers, purple and white and yellow and red, lifting their starry faces to the cloudy sky, and a soft damp air blew in through the open window. Such a change it was after China, with its hard blue skies, brilliant sunshine and dry, invigorating air. But the Manchus were industrious as the Chinese themselves, and where there were fields the crops were tended as carefully as those in China proper, only in between were the pasture-lands and the flowers that were a delight to me, who had not seen a flower save those in pots since I came to China.

I spread out my rugs and cushions and, taking off my clothes and getting into a kimono—also bought in the Kharbin market; a man's kimono as the women's are too narrow—I slept peacefully, and in the morning I found we had climbed to the top of the ridge, the watershed, the pleasant rain was falling softly, all around was the riotous

green, and peasants, Russian and Chinese, came selling sweet red raspberries in little baskets of green twigs.

And the flowers, the flowers of Siberia! After all I had heard about them, they were still something more beautiful than I could have hoped for; and then the rain passed, the life-giving rain, the rain that smoothed away all harshness and gave such a charm and a softness to the scenery. And it was vast. China was so crowded I never had a sense of vastness there; but this was like Australia, great stretches of land under the sky, green, rich lush green, and away in the distance was a dim line of blue hills. Then would come a little corrugated-iron-roofed town sprawled out over the mighty plain, a pathway to it across the surrounding green, and then the sun came out and the clouds threw great shadows and there was room to see the outline of their shapes on the green grass.

There were Chinese still on the stations, but they were becoming more and more Russianised. They still wore queues, but they had belted Russian blouses and top-boots, and they mixed on friendly terms with flaxen-haired, blue-eyed Russians similarly attired. And the evening shadows gathered again and in the new world we steamed into Vladivostok.

The Russians I came across did not appreciate fresh air. The porter of a hotel captured me and Buchanan, and when we arrived on a hot July night I was shown into a bedroom with double windows hermetically sealed and the cracks stopped up with cotton wool!

I protested vehemently and the hotel porter looked at me in astonishment. Tear down those carefully stopped-up cracks! Perish the thought. However, I persuaded him down that cotton wool must come, and he pulled it down regretfully. I called at the British consulate next day and

asked them to recommend me to the best hotel, but they told me I was already there and could not better myself, so I gave myself up to exploring the town in the Far East where now the Czech Slovaks have established themselves.

It is a beautifully situated town set in the hills alongside a narrow arm of the sea, rather a grey sea with a grey sky overhead, and the hills around were covered with the luxuriant green of midsummer, midsummer in a land where it is winter almost to June. The principal buildings in Vladivostok are rather fine, but they are all along the shore, and once you go back you come into the hills where the wood-paved streets very often are mere flights of steps. It is because of that sheltered arm of the sea that here is a town at all.

Along the shore are all manner of craft. The British fleet had come on a visit, and grey and grim the ships lay there on the grey sea, like a Turner picture, with, for a dash of colour, the Union Jacks. The Russian fleet was there too, welcoming their guests, and I took a boat manned by a native of the country, Mongolian evidently, with, of course, an unknown tongue, but whether he was Gold or Gilyak I know not. He was a good boatman, for a nasty little sea got up and James Buchanan told me several times he did not like the new turn our voyaging had taken, and then, poor little dog, he was violently sick. I know the torments of sea-sickness are not lightly to be borne, so after sailing round the fleets I went ashore and studied the shipping from the firm land.

I was glad then that Mr Sly at Kharbin had insisted that I should see the Russian port. The whole picture was framed in green, soft tender green, edged with grey mist, and all the old forgotten ships of wood, the ships that perhaps were sailed by my grandfather in the old East India Company,

seemed to have found a resting-place here. They were drawn up against the shore or they were going down the bay with all their sails set, and the sunlight breaking through the clouds touched the white sails and made them mountains of snow. There was shipbuilding going on too, naturally—for are there not great stores of timber in the forests behind?—and there were ships unloading all manner of things. Ships brought vegetables and fruit ; ships brought meat ; there were fishing-boats, hundreds of them close against each other along the shore, and on all the small ships, at the mast-heads, were little fluttering white butterflies of flags. What they were there for I do not know, or what they denoted. Oh, the general who commands the Czech Slovaks has a splendid base. I wish him all success. And here were the sealing-ships, the ships that presently would go up to the rookeries to bring away the pelts.

One of my brothers was once navigating lieutenant on the British ship that guarded the rookeries “ north of 53°,” and I remembered, as Buchanan and I walked along the shore, the tales he had told me of life in these parts. His particular ship had acquired two sheep, rather an acquisition for men who had lived long off the Chinese coast, and had a surfeit of chickens ; so while they were eating one, thinking to save the other a long sea voyage they landed him on an island, giving him in charge of the man, an Aleut Indian, my brother called him, who ruled the little place. Coming back they were reduced to salt and tinned food, but they cheered themselves with thoughts of the mutton chops that should regale them when they met again their sheep. Alas for those sailor-men ! They found the Indian, but the sheep was not forthcoming.

His whilom guardian was most polite. He gave them to understand he was deeply grieved, but unfortunately he

had been obliged to slay the sheep as he was killing the fowls !

The ward-room mess realised all too late that mutton was appreciated in other places than on board his Majesty's ships.

I thought all the races of the earth met in Kharbin, but I don't know that this port does not run it very close. There were Japanese, Chinese, Russians, Koreans in horsehair hats and white garments ; there were the aboriginal natives of the country and there were numberless Germans. And then, in July, 1914, these people, I think, had no thought of the World's War.

And here I came across a new way of carrying, for all the porters had chairs strapped upon their backs and the load, whatever it was, was placed upon the chair. Of all ways I have seen, that way strikes me as being the best, for the weight is most evenly distributed. Most of the porters, I believe, were Koreans, though they did not wear white ; nor did they wear a hat of any description ; their long black hair was twisted up like a woman's, but they were vigorous and stalwart. We left weakness behind us in China. Here the people looked as if they were meat-fed, and though they might be dirty—they generally were—they all looked as if they had enough.

Always the principal streets were thronged with people. At night the town all lighted up is like a crescent of sparkling diamonds flung against the hill-sides, and when I went to the railway station to take train for Kharbarosvk, thirty hours away, at the junction of the Ussuri and the Amur, that large and spacious building was a seething mass of people of apparently all classes and all nationalities, and they were giving voice to their feelings at the top of their lungs. Everybody, I should think, had a grievance and was makin

the most of it. I had not my capable Mr Poland to arrange for me, so I went first class—the exact fare I have forgotten, but it was ridiculously low—and Buchanan and I had a compartment all to ourselves. Indeed I believe we were the only first-class passengers. I had my basket and my kettles and I had laid in store of provisions, and we went away back west for a couple of hours, and then north into the spacious green country where there was room and more than room for everybody.

CHAPTER X

ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREAT RIVERS

ALL the afternoon we went back on our tracks along the main line, the sea on one side and the green country, riotous, lush, luxuriant, on the other, till at last we reached the head of the gulf and took our last look at the Northern Sea ; grey like a silver shield it spread before us, and right down to the very water's edge came the vivid green. And then we turned inland, and presently we left the main line and went north. Above was the grey sky, and the air was soft and cool and delicious. I had had too much stimulation and I welcomed, as I had done the rains after the summer in my youth, the soft freshness of the Siberian summer.

There were soldiers everywhere, tall, strapping, virile Russians ; there were peasants in belted blouses, with collars all of needlework ; and there were Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and the natives of the country, men with a strong Mongolian cast of countenance. The country itself was strangely empty after teeming China, but these all travelled by train or were to be found on the railway stations and at the fishing stations that we passed, but apparently I was the only bloated aristocrat who travelled first class. In normal times this made travelling fairly easy in Russia, for it was very cheap and you could generally get a carriage to yourself.

Oh ! but it was lovely ; the greenness of the country was a rest to eyes wearied with the dust and dirt of China. And there were trees—not trees denuded of all but enough timber to make a bare livelihood possible, but trees growing

luxuriantly in abundant leaf after their own free will, oaks and firs and white-stemmed, graceful birches bending daintily before the soft breeze. At the stations the natives, exactly like Chinamen, dirty and in rags, brought strawberries for sale; and there were always flowers—purple vetches and gorgeous red poppies, tall foxgloves and blue spikes of larkspur. The very antithesis of China it was, for this was waste land and undeveloped. The very engines were run with wood, and there were stacks of wood by the wayside waiting to be burnt. I was sorry—I could not but be sorry. I have seen my own people cut down the great forests of Western Victoria, and here were people doing the same, with exactly the same wanton extravagance, and in this country, with its seven months of bitter winter, in all probability the trees take three times as long to come to maturity. But it is virgin land, this glorious fertile country, and was practically uninhabited till the Russian Government planted here and there bands of Cossacks who, they say, made no endeavour to develop the land. The Koreans and the Japanese and the Chinese came creeping in, but the Russians made an effort to keep them out. But still the population is scanty. Always, though it was before the war, there were soldiers—soldiers singly, soldiers in pairs, soldiers in little bands; a horseman appeared on a lonely road, he was a soldier; a man came along driving a cart, he was a soldier; but the people we saw were few, for the rigours of this lovely land in the winter are terrible, and this was the dreaded land where Russia sent her exiles a long, long way from home.

Farther we went into the hills; a cuckoo called in the cool and dewy morning; there were lonely little cottages with wooden roofs and log walls; there were flowering creepers round the windows, and once I saw a woman's wistful face

peeping out at the passing train, the new train that at last was bringing her nearer the old home and that yet seemed to emphasise the distance. We went along by a river, the Ussuri, that wound its way among the wooded green hills and by still pools of water that reflected in their depths the blue sky, soft with snow-white clouds. A glorious land this land of exile ! At the next station we stopped at the people were seated at a table having a meal under the shade of the trees. Then there was a lonely cross of new wood ; someone had been laid in his long last home in the wilderness and would never go back to Holy Russia again ; and again I thought of the woman's wistful face that peered out of the flower-bordered window.

This is a new line. Formerly the way to Kharbarosvk was down the Amur river from the west, and that, I suppose, is why all this country of the Amur Province south and east of the river is so lonely.

As we neared Kharbarosvk came signs of settlement, the signs of settlement I had been accustomed to in Australia. There were tree stumps, more and more, and anything more desolate than a forest of newly cut tree stumps I don't know. It always spells to me ruthless destruction. I am sure it did here, for they cut down recklessly, sweeping all before them. It seemed to cry out, as all newly settled land that ever I have seen, and I have seen a good deal, the distaste of the people who here mean to make their homes. These are not our trees, they say ; they are not beautiful like the trees of our own old home ; let us cut them down, there are plenty ; by and by when we have time, when we are settled, we will plant trees that really are worth growing. We shall not see them, of course, our children will benefit little ; but they will be nice for our grandchildren, if we hold on so long. But no one believes they will stay so

long; they hope to make money and go back. Meanwhile they want the timber, but they neglect to plant fresh trees.

They wanted the timber to build Kharbarosvk. This is a town of the outposts, a frontier town; there are no towns like it in the British Isles, where they value their land and build towns compactly, but I have seen its counterpart many a time in Australia, and I know there must be its like in America and Canada. It straggled all along the river bank, and its wide streets, streets paved, or rather floored, here and there with planks of wood, were sparsely planted with houses. In one respect Australian towns of the frontier are much wiser. When there is a train they do build their stations with some regard for the comfort and convenience of the inhabitants. In Russia wherever I have been the railway station is a long distance, sometimes half-an-hour's drive, from the town it serves. I suppose it is one of the evils of the last bad regime and that in the future, the future which is for the people, it will be remedied, but it is difficult to see what purpose it serves. I had to get a droshky to the hotel. We drove first along a country road, then through the wide grass-grown streets of the town, and I arrived at the principal hotel, kept by a German on Russian lines, for the restaurant was perfectly distinct from the living-rooms. I put it on record it was an excellent restaurant; I remember that cold soup—the day was hot—and that most fragrant coffee still.

From the windows of my bedroom I saw another of the world's great rivers. I looked away over a wide expanse of water sparkling in the sunshine: it was the junction of the Ussuri and the Amur, and it was like a great lake or the sea. It was very, very still, clear as glass, and the blue sky and white clouds were reflected in it, and there were green islands

and low green banks. All was colour, but soft colour without outlines, like a Turner picture.

The Amur is hard frozen for about five months of the year and for about two more is neither good solid ice nor navigable water. It is made by the joining of the Shilka and the Aigun in about lat. 53° N. 121° E., and, counting in the Shilka, must be nearly three thousand miles in length, and close on two thousand miles have I now travelled. I don't know the Amur, of course, but at least I may claim to have been introduced to it, and that, I think, is more than the majority of Englishmen may do. And oh, it is a mighty river! At Kharbarosvk, over a thousand versts—about six hundred and forty miles—from the sea, it is at least a mile and a third wide, and towards the mouth, what with backwaters and swamps, it takes up sometimes about forty miles of country, while the main channel is often nearly three miles wide. It rises in the hills of Trans-Baikal—the Yablonoï Mountains we used to call them when I was at school. Really I think it is the watershed that runs up East Central Siberia and turns the waters to the shallow Sea of Okhotsk; and it cuts its way through wooded hills among rich land hardly as yet touched by agriculture, beautiful, lovely hills they are, steep and wooded. It climbs down into the flat country and then again, just before it reaches the sea, it is in the hills, colder hills this time, though the Amur falls into the sea on much the same parallel of latitude as that which sees it rise, only it seems to me that the farther you get east the colder and more extreme is the climate. For Nikolayeusk at the mouth is in the same latitude as London, but as a port it is closed for seven months of the year. True, the winter in Siberia is lovely, bright, clear cold, a hard, bright clearness, but the thermometer is often down below -40°

Fahrenheit, and when that happens life is difficult for both man and beast. No wonder it is an empty river. The wonder to me is that there should be so much life as there is. For in those five months that it is open fine large steamers run from Nikolayeusk by Kharbarosvk to Blagoveschensk, and smaller ones, but still rather fine, to Stretensk, where river navigation, for steamers of any size at any rate, ceases. There are the two months, April-May, September-October, when the river cannot be used at all, and there are the winter months when it may be, and is to a certain extent, used as a road, but with the thermometer down far below zero no one is particularly keen on travelling. It has its disadvantages. So most of the travelling is done in the summer months and in 1914 the steamers were crowded. Now, I suppose, they are fighting there. It is a country well worth fighting for.

It was a curious contrast, the lonely empty river and the packed steamer. It was an event when we passed another; two made a crowd; and very, very seldom did we pass more than two in a day. But it was delightful moving along, the great crowded steamer but a puny thing on the wide river, the waters still and clear, reflecting the blue sky and the soft white clouds and the low banks far, far away. When there were hills they were generally closer, as if the river had had more trouble in cutting a passage and therefore had not had time to spread itself as it did in the plain country. The hills were densely wooded, mostly with dark firs, with an occasional deciduous tree showing up brightly among the dark foliage, and about Blagoveschensk there is a beautiful oak known as the velvet oak, the wood of which is much sought for making furniture. However dense the forest, every here and there would be a wide swath of green bare of trees—a fire brake; for these forests in the summer

burn fiercely, and coming back I saw the valleys thick with the curling blue wood smoke, smelt the aromatic smell of the burning fir woods, and at night saw the hills outlined in flames. It was a gorgeous sight, but it is desperately destructive for the country, especially a country where the wood grows so slowly. But at first there were no fires, and what struck me was the vastness and the loneliness of the mighty river. I had the same feeling on the Congo in the tropics, a great and lonely river with empty banks, but that was for a distance under two hundred miles. Here in the north the great lonely river went wandering on for ten times as far, and still the feeling when one stood apart from the steamer was of loneliness and grandeur. Man was such a small thing here. At night a little wind sighed over the waters or swept down between the hills; round the bows the water rose white; there was a waste of tossing water all round, under a lowering sky, and the far-away banks were lost in the gloom. A light would appear, perhaps two lights shining out of the darkness, but they only emphasised the loneliness. A wonderful river!

The navigation of the river is a profession in itself. There is a school for the navigators at Blagoveschensk where they are properly trained. All along we came across the red beacons that mark the way, while beside them in the daytime we could see the cabins of the lonely men who tended them.

Truly a voyage down the Amur in summer is not to be easily forgotten, and yet, sitting here writing about it in my garden in Kent, I sometimes wonder did I dream it all, the vastness and the loneliness and the grandeur that is so very different from the orchard land wherein is set my home. You do not see orchards on the Amur, the climate is too rigorous, and I doubt if they grow much beyond berries,

a blue berry in large quantities, raspberries, and coming back we bought cucumbers.

Oh, but it was lovely on that river. Dearly should I like to share its delights with a companion who could discuss it with me, but somehow it seems to be my lot to travel alone.

Not, of course, that I was really alone. Though the steamers were few, perhaps because they were few, they were crowded. There were two companies on the river, the "Sormovo" or quick-sailing company, and the Amur Company; and I hereby put it on record that the Amur Company is much the best. The *John Cockerill*, named after some long-dead English engineer who was once on the Amur, is one of the best and most comfortable.

At Kharbarosvk, finding the steamer did not leave till the evening of the next day, I had naturally gone to a hotel. It seemed the obvious thing to do. But I was wrong. The great Russian steamship companies, with a laudable desire to keep passengers and make them comfortable, always allow a would-be traveller to spend at least two days on board in the ports, paying, of course, for his food. And I, who had only come about thirty-six hours too soon, had actually put up at a hotel, with the *John Cockerill* lying at the wharf. The Russo-Asiatic Bank, as represented by a woman clerk, the only one there who could speak English, was shocked at my extravagance and said so. These women clerks were a little surprise for me, for in 1914 I was not accustomed to seeing women in banks, but here in Eastern Siberia—in Vladivostok, Kharbarosvk, and all the towns of the Amur—they were as usual as the men.

The *John Cockerill* surprised me as much as I surprised the bank clerk. To begin with, I didn't realise it was the *John Cockerill*, for I could not read the Russian letters, and

at first I did not recognise the name as pronounced by the Russians. She was a very gorgeous, comfortable ship, with a dining saloon and a lounge gorgeous in green velvet. And yet she was not a post steamer, but spent most of her time drawing barges laden with cargo, and stopped to discharge and take in at all manner of lonely little ports on the great river. She was a big steamer, divided into four classes, and was packed with passengers: Russians in the first, second and third class, with an occasional German or Japanese, and in the fourth an extraordinary medley of poorer Russians, Chinese and Gilyaks and Golds, the aboriginals of the country, men with a Mongolian cast of countenance, long coarse black hair, very often beards, and dirty—the ordinary poor Chinaman is clean and tidy beside them.

But the first class was luxurious. We had electric light and hot and cold water. The cabins were not to hold more than two, and you brought your own bedding. I dare say it could have been hired on the steamer, but the difficulty of language always stood in my way, and once away from the seaboard in North-Eastern Asia the only other European language beside Russian that is likely to be understood is German, and I have no German. I was lucky enough on the *John Cockerill* to find the wife of a Russian colonel who spoke a little English. She, with her husband, was taking a summer holiday by journeying up to Nikolayeusk, and she very kindly took Buchanan and me under her wing and interpreted for us. It was very nice for me, and the only thing I had to complain of on that steamer was the way in which the night watch promenading the deck shut my window and slammed to the shutters. They did it every night, with a care for my welfare I could have done without. In a river steamer the cabins are all in the centre with the deck

round, and the watch evidently could not understand how any woman could really desire to sleep under an open window. I used to get up early in the morning and walk round the decks, and I found that first and second class invariably shut their windows tight, though the nights were always just pleasantly cool, and consequently those passages between the cabins smelt like a menagerie, and an ill-kept menagerie at that. They say Russians age early and invariably they are of a pallid complexion. I do not wonder, now that I have seen their dread of fresh air. Again and again I was told: "Draughts are not good!" Draughts! I'd rather sleep in a hurricane than in the hermetically sealed boxes in which those passengers stowed themselves on board the river steamers. On the *John Cockerill* the windows of the dining saloon and the lounge did open, but on the steamer on which I went up the river, the *Kanovina*, one of the "Sormovo" Company, and the mail steamer, there was only one saloon in the first class. We had our meals and we lived there. It was a fine large room placed for'ard in the ship's bows, with beautiful large windows of glass through which we could see excellently the scenery; but those windows were fast; they would not open; they were not made to open. The atmosphere was always thick when I went in for breakfast in the morning, and I used to make desperate efforts to get the little windows that ran round the top opened. I could not do it myself, as you had to get on the roof of the saloon, the deck where the look-out stood, and anyhow they were only little things, a foot high by two feet broad. But such an innovation was evidently regarded as dangerous. Besides the fact that draughts were bad, I have been assured that perhaps it was going to rain—the rain couldn't come in both sides—and at night I was

assured they couldn't be opened because the lights would be confusing to other steamers !

Nobody seemed to mind an atmosphere you could have cut with a knife. I am sure if the walls had been taken away it would have stood there in a solid block—a dark-coloured, high-smelling block, I should think. I gave up trying to do good to a community against its will and used to carry my meals outside and have them on the little tables that were dotted about the deck.

After all, bar that little difficulty about the air—and certainly if right goes with the majority I have no cause of complaint, I was in a minority of one—those steamers made the most comfortable and cheapest form of travelling I have ever undertaken. From Kharbarosvk to Nikolayeusk for over three days' voyage my fare with a first-class cabin to myself was twelve roubles—about one pound four shillings. I came back by the mail steamer and it was fifteen roubles—about one pound ten shillings. This, of course, does not include food. Food on a Russian steamer you buy as you would on a railway train. You may make arrangements with the restaurant and have breakfast, luncheon, afternoon tea and dinner for so much a day ; or you may have each meal separate and pay for it as you have it ; or you may buy your food at the various stopping-places, get your kettles filled with hot water for a trifling tip, and feed yourself in the privacy of your own cabin. I found the simplest way, having no servant, was to pay so much a day—five shillings on the big steamers, four shillings on the smaller one—and live as I would do at a hotel. The food was excellent on the Amur Company's ships. We had chicken and salmon—not much salmon, it was too cheap—and sturgeon. Sturgeon, that prince of fish, was a treat, and caviare was as common as

marmalade used to be on a British breakfast-table. It was generally of the red variety that we do not see here and looked not unlike clusters of red currants, only I don't know that I have ever seen currants in such quantities. I enjoyed it very much till one day, looking over the railing into the stern of the boat, where much of the food was roughly prepared—an unwise thing to do—I saw an extremely dirty woman of the country, a Gilyak, in an extremely dirty garment, with her dirty bare arms plunged to the elbow in the red caviare she was preparing for the table. Then I discovered for a little while that I didn't much fancy caviare. But I wish I had some of that nice red caviare now.

The second class differed but little from the first. There was not so much decoration about the saloons, and on the *John Cockerill*, where the first class had two rooms, they had only one; and the food was much the same, only not so many courses. There was plenty, and they only paid three shillings a day for the four meals. The people were much the same as we in the first class, and I met a girl from Samara, in Central Russia, who spoke a little French. She was a teacher and was going to Nikolayeusk for a holiday exactly as I have seen teachers here in England go to Switzerland.

But between the first and second and the third and fourth class was a great gulf fixed. They were both on the lower deck, the third under the first and the fourth under the second, while amidships between them were the kitchens and the engines and the store of wood for fuel. The third had no cabins, but the people went to bed and apparently spent their days in places like old-fashioned dinner-wagons; and they bought their own food, either from the steamer or at the various stopping-places, and ate it on their beds, for they had no saloon. The fourth class was still more primi-

tive. The passengers, men, women and children, were packed away upon shelves rising in three tiers, one above the other, and the place of each man and woman was marked out by posts. There was no effort made to provide separate accommodation for men and women. As far as I could see, they all herded together like cattle.

The ship was crowded. The Russian colonel's wife and I used to walk up and down the long decks for exercise, with Buchanan in attendance, she improving her English and I learning no Russian. It is evidently quite the custom for the people of the great towns of the Amur to make every summer an excursion up the river, and the poorer people, the third and fourth class, go up to Nikolayeusk for the fishing. Hence those shelves crowded with dirty folk. There were troughs for washing outside the fourth class, I discovered, minor editions of our luxurious bathrooms in the first class, but I am bound to say they did not have much use. Washing even in this hot weather, and it certainly was pleasantly warm, was more honoured in the breach than in the observance. The only drawback to the bathrooms in the first class, from my point of view, was their want of air. They were built so that apparently there was no means of getting fresh air into them, and I always regarded myself as a very plucky woman when in the interests of cleanliness I had a bath. The hot water and the airlessness always brought me to such a condition of faintness that I generally had to rush out and lie on the couch in my cabin to recover, and then if somebody outside took it upon them to bang to the window I was reduced to the last gasp.

The *John Cockerill* was run like a man-of-war. The bells struck the hours and half-hours, the captain and officers were clad in white and brass-bound, and the men were in orthodox sailor's rig. One man came and explained to me—he spoke

no tongue that I could understand, but his meaning was obvious—that Buchanan was not allowed on the first-class deck, the rules and regulations, so said the colonel's wife, said he was not; but no one seemed to object, so I thought to smooth matters by paying half-a-rouble; then I found that every sailor I came across apparently made the same statement, and having listened to one or two, at last I decided to part with no more cash, and it was, I suppose, agreed that Buchanan had paid his footing, for they troubled me no more about him.

Three or four times a day we pulled up at some little wayside place, generally only two or three log-houses with painted doors or windows, an occasional potato patch and huge stacks of wood to replenish the fuel of the steamer, and with much yelling they put out a long gangway, and while the wood was brought on board we all went ashore to see the country. The country was always exactly alike, vast and green and lonely, the sparse human habitations emphasising that vastness and loneliness. The people were few. The men wore belted blouses and high boots and very often, though it was summer, fur caps, and the women very voluminous and very dirty skirts with unbelted blouses, a shawl across their shoulders and a kerchief on their unkempt hair. They were dirty; they were untidy; they were uneducated; they belonged to the very poorest classes; and I think I can safely say that all the way from Kharbarosvyk to Nikolayeusk the only attempt at farming I saw was in a few scattered places where the grass had been cut and tossed up into haycocks. And yet those people impressed upon me a sense of their virility and strength, a feeling that I had never had when moving among the Chinese, where every inch of land—bar the graves—is turned to good account. Was it the condition of the women? I wonder. I know I never

saw one of those stalwart women pounding along on her big flat feet without a feeling of gladness and thankfulness. Here at least was good material. It was crude and rough, of course, but it was there waiting for the wheel of the potter. Shall we find the potter in the turmoil of the revolution and the war ?

We went on, north, north with a little of east, and it grew cooler and the twilight grew longer. I do not know how other people do, but I count my miles and realise distances from some distance I knew well in my youth. So I know that from Kharbarosvk to Nikolaycusk is a little farther away than is Melbourne from Sydney ; and always we went by way of the great empty land, by way of the great empty river. Sometimes far in the distance we could see the blue hills ; sometimes the hills were close ; but always it was empty, because the few inhabitants, the house or two at the little stopping-places where were the piles of wood for the steamer, but emphasised the loneliness and emptiness. You could have put all the people we saw in a street of a suburb of London and lost them, and I suppose the distance traversed was as far as from London to Aberdeen. It was a beautiful land, a land with a wondrous charm, but it is waiting for the colonist who will dare the rigours of the winter and populate it.

At last we steamed up to the port of Nikolayeusk, set at the entrance of the shallow Sea of Okhotsk, right away in the east of the world. When I set foot upon the wharf among all the barrels with which it was packed I could hardly believe I had come so far east, so far away from my regular beat. One of my brothers always declares I sent him to sea because my sex prevented me from going, and yet here I was, in spite of that grave disadvantage, in as remote a corner of the earth as even he might have hoped to attain.

It was a July day, sunny and warm. They had slain an Austrian archduke in Serbia and the world was on the verge of the war of the ages, but I knew nothing of all that. I stepped off the steamer and proceeded to investigate Nikolayeusk, well satisfied with the point at which I had arrived.

CHAPTER XI

THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

NIKOLAYEUSK seemed to me the ends of the earth. I hardly know why it should have done so, for I arrived there by way of a very comfortable steamer and I have made my way to very much more ungetatable places. I suppose the explanation is that all the other places I have visited I had looked up so long on the map that when I arrived I only felt I was attaining the goal I had set out to reach, whereas I must admit I had never heard of Nikolayeusk till Mr Sly, the British consul, sketched it out as the end of my itinerary on the Siberian rivers, and ten days later I found myself in the Far Eastern town. I remember one of my brothers writing to me once from Petropaulovski :

“I always said my address would some day be Kamscatkha and here I am !”

Well, I never said my address would be Nikolayeusk because I had never heard of it, but here I was nevertheless. The weather was warm, the sun poured down from a cloudless blue sky, and in the broad, grass-grown streets, such streets have I seen in Australian towns, when the faint breeze stirred the yellow dust rose on the air. And the town straggled all along the northern side of the river, a town of low, one-storeyed wooden houses for the most part, with an occasional two-storeyed house and heavy shutters to all the windows. There was a curious absence of stone, and the streets when they were paved at all were, as in Kharbarosvk, lines of planks, sometimes three, sometimes five

planks wide, with a waste of dust or mud or grass, as the case might be, on either side.

The Russians I found kindness itself. In Vladivostok I had met a man who knew one of my brothers—I sometimes wonder if I could get to such a remote corner of the earth that I should not meet someone who knew one of these ubiquitous brothers of mine—and this good friend, having sampled the family, took me on trust and found someone else who would give me a letter to the manager of the Russo-Asiatic Bank at Nikolayeusk. This was a godsend, for Mr Pauloff spoke excellent English, and he and his corresponding clerk, a Russian lady of middle age who had spent a long time in France, took me in hand and showed me the sights. Madame Schulmann and I and Buchanan drove all over the town in one of the most ancient victorias I have ever seen—the most ancient are in Saghalien, which is beyond the ends of the earth—and she very kindly took me to a meal at the principal hotel. I was staying on board the steamer while I looked around me. The visit with this lady decided me not to go there. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, so I don't know whether our meal was dinner or tea or luncheon; we had good soup, I remember, and nice wine, to say nothing of excellent coffee, but the atmosphere left much to be desired. I don't suppose the windows ever had been opened since the place was built, and no one seemed to see any necessity for opening them. My hostess smiled at my distress. She said she liked fresh air herself but that for a whole year she had lodged in a room where the windows would not open. She had wanted to have one of the panes—not the window, just one of the panes—made to open to admit fresh air, and had offered to do it at her own expense, but her landlord refused. It would spoil the look of the room. She advised me strongly

if I wanted fresh air to stay as long as I could on board the steamer at the wharf, and I decided to take her advice.

The Russo-Asiatic Bank was not unlike the banks I have seen in Australian townships, in that it was built of wood of one storey and the manager and his wife lived on the premises, but the roof was far more ornamental than Australia could stand and gave the touch of the East that made for romance. The manager was good enough to ask me to dinner and to include Buchanan in the invitation because I did not like to leave the poor little chap shut up in my cabin. This was really dinner, called so, and we had it at five o'clock of a hot summer's afternoon, a very excellent dinner, with delicious sour cream in the soup and excellent South Australian wine, not the stuff that passes for Australian wine in England and that so many people take medicinally, but really good wine, such as Australians themselves drink. The house was built with a curious lack of partitions that made for spaciousness, so that you wandered from one room to another, hardly knowing that you had gone from the sitting-room to the bedroom, and James Buchanan going on a voyage of discovery unfortunately found the cradle, to the dismay of his mistress. He stood and looked at it and barked.

"Gracious me! What's this funny thing! I've never seen anything like it before!"

Neither had I; but I was covered with shame when a wail proclaimed the presence of the son and heir.

Naturally I expressed myself—truly—charmed with the town, and Mr Pauloff smiled and nodded at his wife, who spoke no English.

"She hates it," said he; "she has never been well since we came here."

She was white, poor little girl, as the paper on which this

is written, and very frail-looking, but it never seemed to occur to anyone that it would be well to open the double windows, and so close was the air of the room that it made me feel sick and faint.

"She never goes out," said her husband. "She is not well enough."

I believe there was a time in our grandmothers' days when we too dreaded the fresh air.

And in this the town differed markedly from any Australian towns I have known. The double windows were all tight shut these warm July days, with all the cracks stopped up with cotton wool, with often decorations of coloured ribbons or paper wandering across the space between. Also there were very heavy shutters, and I thought these must be to shut out the winter storms, but M. Pauloff did not seem to think much of the winter storms, though he admitted they had some bad blizzards and regularly the thermometer went down below -40° Fahrenheit.

"No," he said, "we shut them at night, at four in the winter and at nine in the summer. Leave them open you cannot."

"But why?" I thought it was some device for keeping out still more air.

"There is danger," said he—"danger from men."

"Do they steal?" said I, surprised.

"And kill," he added with conviction.

It seems that when the Japanese invaded Saghalien, the great island which lies opposite the mouth of the Amur, they liberated at least thirty thousand convicts, and they burnt the records so that no one could prove anything against them, and the majority of these convicts were un- luckily not all suffering political prisoners, but criminals, many of them of the deepest dye. These first made Saghalien an

unwholesome place to live in, but gradually they migrated to the mainland, and Nikolayeusk and other towns of Eastern Siberia are by no means safe places in consequence. Madame Schulmann told me that many a time men were killed in the open streets and that going back to her lodgings on the dark winter evenings she was very much afraid and always tried to do it in daylight.

Nikolayeusk is officially supposed to have thirteen thousand inhabitants, but really in the winter-time, says Mr Pauloff, they shrink to ten thousand, while in the summer they rise to over forty thousand, everybody coming for the fishing, the great salmon fisheries.

"Here is noting," said he, "noting—only fish."

And this remark he made at intervals. He could not reiterate it too often, as if he were warning me against expecting too much from this remote corner of the world. But indeed the fish interested me. The summer fishing was on while I was there, but that, it seems, is as nothing to the autumn fishing, when the fish rush into the wide river in solid blocks. The whole place then is given over to the fishing and the other trades that fishing calls into being to support it. All the summer the steamers coming down the river are crowded, and they bring great cargoes of timber; the wharves when I was there were covered with barrels and packing-cases containing, according to Mr Pauloff, "only air." These were for the fish. And now, when the humble mackerel costs me at least ninepence or a shilling, I remember with longing the days when I used to see a man like a Chinaman, but not a Chinaman, a bamboo across his shoulder, and from each end a great fresh salmon slung, a salmon that was nearly as long as the bearer, and I could have bought the two for ten kopecks!

He that will not when he may!

But great as the trade was down the river, most eatables—groceries, flour and such-like things—came from Shanghai, and the ships that brought them took back wood to be made into furniture, and there was, when I was there, quite a flourishing trade in frozen meat with Australia, Nikolayeusk requiring about two hundred and forty thousand pounds in the year. In winter, of course, all the provisions are frozen; the milk is poured into basins, a stick is stuck in it and it freezes round it, so that a milk-seller instead of having a large can has an array of sticks on top of which is the milk frozen hard as a stone. Milk, meat, eggs, all provisions are frozen from October to May.

I do not know what Nikolayeusk is doing now war and revolution have reached it. At least they have brought it into touch with the outer world.

And having got so far I looked longingly out over the harbour and wondered whether I might not go to Saghalien.

Mr Pauloff laughed at my desires. If there was nothing to see in Nikolayeusk, there was less than nothing in Saghalien. It was dead. It never had been much and the Japanese invasion had killed it. Not that he harboured any animosity against the Japanese. Russians and Japanese, he declared, were on very friendly terms, and though they invaded Saghalien they did not disgrace their occupation by any atrocities. The Russian, everybody declared in Nikolayeusk, bridges the gulf between the white man and the yellow. Russian and Chinese peasants will work side by side in friendliest fashion; they will occupy the same boarding-houses; the Russian woman does not object to the Chinese as a husband, and the Russian takes a Chinese wife. Of course these are the peasant classes. The Russian authorities made very definite arrangements for keeping out Chinese from Siberia, as I saw presently when I went back up the river.

But the more I thought of it the more determined I was not to go back till I had gone as far east as I possibly could go. The Russian Volunteer fleet I found called at Alexandrovsk regularly during the months the sea was open, making Nikolayeusk its most northern port of call. I could go by the steamer going down and be picked up by the one coming north. It would give me a couple of days in the island, and Mr Paulooff was of opinion that a couple of days would be far too long.

But the *John Cockerill* was going back and Buchanan and I must find another roof and a resting-place. According to the inhabitants, it would not be safe to sleep in the streets, and I had conceived a distinct distaste for the hotel. But the *Erivan* lay in the stream and to that we transferred ourselves and our belongings, where the mate spoke English with a strong Glasgow accent and the steward had a smattering. It was only a smattering, however. I had had a very early lunch and no afternoon tea, so when I got on board at six in the evening I was decidedly hungry and demanded food, or rather when food might be expected. The steward was in a dilemma. It was distinctly too early for dinner, he considered, and too late for tea. He scratched his head.

"Lunch!" said he triumphantly, and ushered me into the saloon, where hung large photographs of the Tsar, the Tsarina and the good-looking little Tsarevitch. In the corner was an ikon, St Nicolas, I think, who protects sailors. And there at six o'clock in the evening I meekly sat down to luncheon all by myself.

Lying there I had a lovely view of the town. At night, like Vladivostok, it lay like a ring of diamonds along the shore of the river; and in the daytime the softly rounded green hills, the grey-blue sky and the grey-blue sea with the little white wavelets, and the little town just a line

between the green and the blue, with the spires and domes of the churches and other public buildings, green and blue and red and white, made a view that was worth coming so far to see. There were ships in the bay too—not very big ships; but a ship always has an attraction: it has come from the unknown; it is about to go into the unknown—and as I sat on deck there came to me the mate with the Scots accent and explained all about the ships in sight.

The place was a fort and they were going to make it a great harbour, to fill it up till the great ships should lie along the shore. It will take a good time, for we lay a long way out, but he never doubted the possibility; and meantime the goods come to the ships in the lighters in which they have already come down the river, and they are worked by labourers getting, according to the mate, twelve shillings a day.

“Dey carry near as much as we do,” said he.

Then there were other ships: a ship for fish, summer fish, for Japan, sealers for the rookeries, and ships loading timber for Kamseatkha. I thought I would like to emulate my brother and go there, and the Russky mate thought it would be quite possible, only very uncomfortable. It would take three months, said he, and it was rather late in the season now. Besides, these ships load themselves so with timber that there is only a narrow space on deck to walk on, and they are packed with passengers, mostly labourers, going up for the short summer season.

My old trouble, want of air, followed me on board the *Erivan*. On deck it was cool, at night the thermometer registered about 55° Fahrenheit, but in my cabin Buchanan and I gasped with the thermometer at over 90°, and that with the port, a very small one, open. That stuffiness was horrible. The bathroom looked like a boiler with a tight-

fitting iron door right amidships, and having looked at it I had not the courage to shut myself in and take a bath. It seemed as if it would be burying myself alive. As it was, sleep down below I could not, and I used to steal up on deck and with plenty of rugs and cushions lay myself out along the seats and sleep in the fresh air; but a seat really does leave something to be desired in the way of luxury.

But the early mornings were delightful. The first faint light showed a mist hanging over the green hills marking out their outlines, green and blue and grey; then it was all grey mist; but to the east was the crimson of the dawn, and we left our moorings early one morning and steamed into that crimson. The sun rose among silver and grey clouds, and rose again and again as we passed along the river and the mountains hid him from sight. There were long streaks of silver on the broad river; slowly the fir-clad hills emerged from the mist and the air was moist and fragrant; the scent of the sea and the fragrance of the pines was in it. A delicious, delicate northern sunrise it was; never before or since have I seen such a sunrise. Never again can I possibly see one more beautiful.

And the great river widened. There were little settlements, the five-pointed tents of the Russian soldiers and many places for catching fish. No wonder the fish—fish is always salmon here—like this great wide river. The brownish water flowed on swiftly and the morning wind whipped it into never-ending ripples that caught the sunlight. A wonderful river! A delightful river! I have grown enthusiastic over many rivers. I know the Murray in my own land and the great rivers of tropical Africa, the Congo, the Gambia, the Volta, grand and lovely all of them. I felt I had looked upon the glory of the Lord when I had looked upon them, but there was something in the tender

beauty of the Amur, the summer beauty veiled in mist, the beauty that would last so short a time, that was best of all.

Meanwhile the passengers and officers of the *Erivan* were much exercised in their minds over me. What could an Englishwoman want in Saghalien? To my surprise I found that none had ever stayed there before, though it was on record that one had once landed there from a steamer. The mate was scathing in his remarks.

"Dere are skeeters," said he, "big ones, I hear," and he rolled his "r's" like a true Scotsman.

"But where can I stay?" He shook his head.

"In de hotel you cannot stay. It is impossible." That I could quite believe, but all the same, if the hotel was impossible, where could I stay?

However, here I was, and I did not intend to go back to Vladivostok by sea. At Alexandrosvk, the town of Saghalien, I proposed to land and I felt it was no good worrying till I got there.

We entered De Castries Bay in a soft grey mist, a mist that veiled the mountains behind. Then the mist lifted and showed us the string of islands that guard the mouth of the bay, strung in a line like jewels set in the sea, and the hills on them were all crowned with firs; and then the mist dropped again, veiling all things.

It was a lonely place, where I, being a foreigner, was not allowed to land, and we did not go close up to the shore, but the shore came to us in great white whale-boats. Many peasants and soldiers got off here, and I saw saws and spades in the bundles, the bundles of emigrants. There were a few women amongst them, women with hard, elemental faces, so different from the Chinese, that were vacuous and refined. I remembered the women who had listened to the lecturer at

Fen Chou Fu and I drew a long sigh of relief. It was refreshing to look at those big-hipped women, with their broad, strong feet and their broad, strong hands and the little dirty kerchiefs over their heads. Elemental, rough, rude, but I was glad of them. One was suckling a child in the boat, calmly, as if it were the most natural thing to do, and somehow it was good to see it. The beginning of life.

The morning brought a dense mist, and as it cleared away it showed us a sparkling, smooth sea, greyish-blue like the skies above it, and a little wooden town nestling against fir-clad hills. We had arrived at Alexandrovsk and I wondered what would become of me.

And then once again I learned what a kind place is this old world of ours that we abuse so often. I had gone on board that steamer without any introduction whatever, with only my passport to show that I was a respectable member of society. I knew nobody and saw no reason whatever why anyone should trouble themselves about me. But we carried distinguished passengers on board the *Erivan*. There was the Vice-Governor of Saghalien, his wife and son, with the soldiers in attendance, and a good-looking young fellow with short-cropped hair and dreamy eyes who was the Assistant Chief of Police of the island, and this man, by command of the Governor, took me in charge.

Never again shall I hear of the Russian police without thinking of the deep debt of gratitude that I owe to Vladimir Merokushoff of Saghalien.

I do not think as a rule that people land from steamers at Alexandrovsk on to red tapestry carpets under fluttering bunting to the strains of a band. But we did; and the Chief of Police—he spoke no language but Russian—motioned me to wait a moment, and when the Governor had been safely

despatched to his home he appeared on the scene with a victoria and drove me and Buchanan to the police station, a charming little one-storeyed building buried in greenery, and there he established us. Buchanan he appreciated as a dog likes to be appreciated, and he gave up to me his own bedroom, where the top pane of the window had actually been made to open. His sitting-room was a very bower of growing plants, and when I went to bed that night he brought his elderly working housekeeper, a plain-faced woman whom he called "Stera," and made her bring her bed and lay it across my door, which opened into the sitting-room. It was no good my protesting; there she had to sleep. Poor old thing, she must have been glad my stay was not long. Every day she wore a blue skirt and a drab-coloured blouse, unbelted, and her grey hair twisted up into an untidy knot behind, but she was an excellent cook. That young man got himself into his everyday holland summer coat and to entertain me proceeded to lay in enough provisions to supply a hungry school. He showed me the things first to see if I liked them, as if I wouldn't have liked shark when people were so kind. But as a matter of fact everything was very good. He produced a large tin of crawling crayfish, and when I had expressed not only my approval but my delight, they appeared deliciously red and white for dinner, and then I found they were only *sakouska*—that is, the *hors d'œuvre* that the Russians take to whet their appetites. I have often lived well, but never better than when I, a stranger and a sojourner, was taken in charge by the hospitable Russian police, who would not let me pay one penny for my board and lodging. We fed all day long. I had only to come in for a bottle of wine or beer to be produced. I was given a *gens d'arme* to carry my camera and another to take care of Buchanan. Never surely was stranger so well done as I by hospitable

Saghalien. The policeman made me understand he was an author and presented me with a couple of pamphlets he had written on Saghalien and its inhabitants, but though I treasure them I cannot read them. Then the Japanese photographer was sent for and he and I were taken sitting side by side on the bench in his leafy porch, and, to crown all, because I could speak no Russian, he sent for two girls who had been educated in Japan and who spoke English almost as well as I did myself, though they had never before spoken to an Englishwoman. Marie and Lariss Borodin were they, and their father kept the principal store in Alexandrosvk. They were dainty, pretty, dark-eyed girls and they were a godsend to me. They had a tea in my honour and introduced me to the manager of the coal mine of Saghalien and took care I should have all the information about the island it was in their power to supply.

There were then about five thousand people there, one thousand in Alexandrosvk itself, but they were going daily, for the blight of the convict was over the beautiful land. The best coal mine is closed down on fire and the one whose manager I met was leased to a company by the year and worked by Chinese on most primitive lines. There is gold, he told me, this business man who surprised me by his lavish use of perfume, but he did not know whether it would pay for working—gold and coal as well would be almost too much good luck for one island—and there is naphtha everywhere on the east coast, but as it has never been struck they think that the main vein must come up somewhere under the sea. Still it is there waiting for the enterprising man who shall work it.

Saghalien used to be as bad as Nikolayeusk, they told me, after the Japanese had evacuated the northern part; but now the most enterprising section of the convicts had

betaken themselves to the mainland, and though the free settlers were few and far between, and the most of the people I saw were convicts, they were the harmless ones with all the devilment gone out of them.

Alexandrosvk is a place of empty houses. When the Japanese came the people fled, leaving everything exactly as it was; and though the Japanese behaved with admirable restraint, considering they came as an invading army, many of these people never came back again, and the alertness in a bad cause which had sent many of the convicts there against their will sent them away again as soon as they were free. All down by the long wooden pier which stretches out into the sea are great wooden storehouses and barracks, empty, and a monument, if they needed it, to the courteous manner in which the Japanese make war. They had burnt the museum, they told me, and opened the prison doors and burnt the prison, but the other houses they had spared. And so there were many, many empty houses in Alexandrosvk.

All the oldest carriages in the world have drifted to Saghalien. They are decrepit in Western Siberia, they are worse, if possible, in the East, but in the island of Saghalien I really don't know how they hold together. Perhaps they are not wanted very often. I hired the most archaic victoria I have ever seen and the two girls came for a drive with me all round the town and its neighbourhood. It was a drive to be remembered. The early summer was in all its full freshness, the red and white cows stood knee-deep in grass that was green and lush everywhere. There were fir-trees on the hills and on every spur of the hills, and there were hedges with dog-roses blossoming all over them; there were fields of dark blue iris; there were little red tiger lilies and a spiked heliotrope flower like veronica, only each bloom grew on a single stalk of its own; there were purple vetches and white

spiræa growing in marshy places, and the land was thick with sweet-scented clover among which the bees were humming, and in a little village there was a Greek church that, set in its emerald-green field, was a very riot of colour. There were balls on the roof of royal blue, the roof itself was of pale green, the walls were of brown logs untouched by paint and the window edges were picked out in white. I photographed that picturesque little church, as I did the peasant women standing at the doors of their log huts and the queer old shandrydan in which we drove, but alas ! all my photographs perished miserably in Russia. The girls wondered that I liked town and country so much, that I saw so much beauty in everything.

“ Ah ! Madame,” they sighed, “ but you can go away to-morrow ! If only we could go ! ”

They had been educated at a convent and they produced the English books they had read. They were very apologetic but they had found them rather tame. Had I read them ? I smiled, for they all turned out to be the immortal works of Charles Garvice !

And we had tea in the dining-room, where father slept because they were rather crowded, the store took up so much room ; and it was a very nice tea too, with raspberry jam in saucers, which we ate Russian fashion with a spoon, and the roses in the garden tapped against the window-panes, asking to come in and join us, and Buchanan got what his soul loved, plenty of cake. They apologised because there was no fruit. No fruit save berries ripen in Saghalien and the strawberries would not be ready till well on in August. No words of mine can tell how kind they were to the stranger.

I went back in the long twilight that was so cool and restful and sat outside the leafy shaded police station and killed mosquitoes, for the mate had heard aright, there were

“skeeters” and to spare, the sort to which Mark Twain took a gun. I watched the grey mist creeping slowly down, down the beautiful mountains, and when it had enveloped them the night was come and it was time to go in and have dinner and go to bed.

Perhaps it would not do to stay long in Saghalien. There is nothing to do. She lies a Sleeping Beauty waiting the kiss of the Prince. Will this war awaken her? The short time I was there I enjoyed every moment.

The people seemed nondescript. The upper class were certainly Russians, and all the men wore military caps and had their hair clipped so close it looked shaven, but it would be utterly impossible to say to what nationality the peasant belonged. There were flaxen-haired Russians certainly, but then there were dark-bearded men, a Mongolian type, and there were many thrifty Chinese with queues, in belted blouses and high boots, generally keeping little eating-shops. There may have been Japanese, probably there were, seeing they hold the lower half of the island, but I did not notice them, and there is, I am afraid, in that place which is so full of possibilities absolutely nothing for that go-ahead nation to do.

My pretty girls complained dreadfully. They looked after the shop and then there was nothing. In the winter they said they had skating and they liked the winter best, but the really bad time in places like Saghalien and Nikolayevsk were the two months when it was neither winter nor summer. Then their only means of communication with the outside world, the river and the sea, was too full of ice to admit of navigation and yet was not solid enough for dog-sled, so that if the telegraph broke down, and it very often did, they are entirely cut off from the world. Saghalien, of course, is worse off than the town, for on the mainland

presumably there are roads of sorts that can be negotiated in case of necessity, but the island is entirely isolated. In the winter the mails take five days coming across the frozen sea from the mainland, and often when there are storms they take much longer. Fancy living on an island that stretches over nearly ten degrees of latitude, which for five months in the year gets its mails by dog-sled and for two goes without them altogether ! On the whole, there may be drawbacks to living in Saghalien !

I left it at nine o'clock in the evening, after the darkness had fallen, and the police officer and the pretty girls saw me on board the steamer which was to take me back to Nikolayevsk. They loaded me with flowers and they were full of regrets.

" Oh, Madame, Madame, how lucky you are to get away from Saghalien ! "

But I said truly enough that I felt my luck lay in getting there. And now that I sit in my garden in Kent and watch the beans coming into blossom and the roses into bloom, look at the beds gay with red poppies and violas, cream and purple, or wander round and calculate the prospects of fruit on the cherry and the pear trees, I am still more glad to think that I know what manner of island that is that lies so far away in the Eastern world that it is almost West.

CHAPTER XII

FACING WEST

ON the 25th July 1914, at nine o'clock in the evening, I left Saghalien, and as the ship steamed away from the loom of the land into the night I knew that at last, after eighteen months of voyaging in the East, I had turned my face homeward. I had enjoyed it, but I wanted to go home, and in my notebook I see evidences of this longing. At last I was counting the days—one day to Nikolayeusk, three days to Kharbarosvk, three days more to Blagoveschensk—and I was out in my calculations in the very beginning. The ships of the Volunteer fleet take their time, and we took three days wandering along the island of Saghalien and calling at ports I should think mail steamer had never before called at before we turned again towards the mainland.

And yet in a way it was interesting, for I saw some of the inhabitants of the island, the aboriginal inhabitants, I should never have otherwise seen. Gilyaks they are, and the water seems their element. They have the long straight black hair of the Mongolian, and sometimes they were clad in furs—ragged and old and worn, the very last remains of furs—sometimes merely in dirty clothes, the cast-offs of far-away nations.

They live by the fish. There is nothing else.

I tried hard to photograph these aborigines, using all sorts of guile to get them into focus. I produced cigarettes, I offered sugar, but as soon as they found out what I was about they at once fled, even though their boat was fastened

against the gangway and it meant abandoning somebody who was on board. I did eventually get some photographs, but they shared the fate of the rest of my Russian pictures, and I am sorry, for I do not suppose I shall ever again have the chance of photographing the Gilyak in his native haunts. He belongs to a dying race, they told me, and there are few children amongst them.

And though we lay long at De Castries Bay they would not let me take pictures there at all. It was forbidden, so I was reduced to doing the best I could through my cabin port. In Alexandrovsk the police officer had aided and abetted my picture-making, but in Nikolayeusk it was a forbidden pastime, for the town, for purposes of photography, was a fort, and when I boarded the *Kanovina* on the river, the post steamer bound for Blagoveschensk, I met with more difficulties.

There was on board a Mrs Marie Skibitsky and her husband, the headmaster of the Nikolayeusk "Real" School, and she spoke very good English and was a kind friend to me. Through her came a message from the captain to the effect that though he did not mind my photographing himself, it was forbidden in Russia, and he begged me not to do it when anyone was looking on. That made it pretty hopeless, for the ship was crowded and there was always not one person but probably a score of people taking a very great interest. The captain was not brass-bound as he had been in the *John Cockerill*, but he and all his officers were clad in khaki, with military caps, and it was some time before I realised them as the ship's officers. The captain looked to me like a depressed corporal who was having difficulties with his sergeant, and the ship, though they charged us three roubles more for the trip to Blagoveschensk than the Amur Company would have done, was dirty and ill-kept. It was

in her I met the saloon the windows of which would not open, and the water in my cabin had gone wrong, and when I insisted that I could not be happy till I had some, it was brought me in a teapot ! They never struck the hours on this steamer as they had done on the *John Cockerill*, and gone was the excellent cook, and the food consisted largely of meat, of which I am bound to say there was any quantity.

But in spite of all drawbacks the ship was crowded ; there were many officers and their wives on board, and there were many officers on board with women who were not their wives. These last were so demonstrative that I always took them for honeymoon couples till at last a Cossack officer whom I met farther on explained :

“ Not wives. Oh no ! It is always so ! It is just the steamer ! ”

Whether these little irregularities were to be set down to the discomforts of the steamer or to the seductive air of the river, I do not know. Perhaps I struck a particularly amorous company. I am bound to say no one but me appeared to be embarrassed. It seemed to be all in the day's work.

It was pleasant going up the river again and having beside me one who could explain things to me. Every day it grew warmer, for not only was the short northern summer reaching its zenith, but we were now going south again. And Mrs Skibitsky sat beside me and rubbed up her English and told me how in two years' time she proposed to bring her daughters to England to give them an English education, and I promised to look out for her and show her the ropes and how she could best manage in London. In two years' time ! And we neither of us knew that we were on the threshold of the greatest war in the world's history.

I took the breaking out of that war so calmly.

We arrived at Kharbarosvk. I parted from Mrs Skibitsky,

who was going to Vladivostok, and next day I looked up my friend the colonel's wife with whom I had travelled on the *John Cockerill*. She received me with open arms, but the household cat flew and spat and stated in no measured terms what she thought of Buchanan. The lady caught the cat before I realised what was happening and in a moment she had scored with her talons great red lines that spouted blood on her mistress's arms. She looked at them calmly, went into the kitchen, rubbed butter on her wounds and came back smiling as if nothing in the world had happened. But it was not nothing. I admired her extremely for a very brave woman. Presently her husband came in and she just drew down her sleeves to cover her torn arms and said not a word to him. He was talking earnestly and presently she said to me :

“ There is war ! ”

I thought she meant between Buchanan and the cat and I smiled feebly, because I was very much ashamed of the trouble I and my dog had caused, but she said again :

“ There is war ! Between Austria and Serbia ! ”

It did not seem to concern me. I don't know that I had ever realised Serbia as a distinct nationality at all before, and she knew so little English and I knew no Russian at all, so that we were not able to discuss the matter much, though it was evident that the colonel was very much excited. That, I thought, might be natural. He was a soldier. War was his business, though here, I think, he was engaged in training boys.

After the midday meal—*déjeuner*, I think we called it—she and I went for a walk, and presently down the wide streets of Kharbarosvk came a little procession of four led by a wooden-legged man bearing a Russian naval flag, the blue St Andrew's Cross on a white ground. I looked at them.

They meant nothing to me in that great, empty street where the new little trees were just beginning to take root and the new red-brick post office dominated all minor buildings among many empty spaces.

"They want war! They ask for war!" said my friend. I was witnessing my first demonstration against Germany! And I thought no more of it than I do of the children playing in the streets of this Kentish village!

She saw me on to the steamer and bade me farewell, and then my troubles began. Not a single person on that steamer spoke English. However, I had always found the Russians so kind that the fact that we could not understand one another when the going was straight did not seem to matter very much. But I had not reckoned with the Russians at war.

At Kharbarosvk the river forms the Chinese-Russian boundary and a little beyond it reaches its most southern point, about lat. 48°. But the China that was on our left was not the China that I knew. This was Manchuria, green and fresh as Siberia itself, and though there was little or no agriculture beyond perhaps a patch of vegetables here and there, on both sides of the broad river was a lovely land of hills and lush grass and trees. Here were firs and pines and cedars, whose sombreness contrasted with the limes and elms, the poplars and dainty birches with which they were interspersed. The Russian towns were small, the merest villages, with here and there a church with the painted ball-like domes they affect, and though the houses were of unpainted logs, always the windows and doors were painted white.

And at every little town were great piles of wood waiting for the steamer, and whenever we stopped men hastily set to work bringing in loads of wood to replace that which we

had burnt. And we burnt lavishly. Even the magnificent forests of Siberia will not stand this drain on them long.

The other day when the National Service papers came round one was sent to a dear old "Sister" who for nearly all her life has been working for the Church in an outlying district of London. She is past work now, but she can still go and talk to the old and sick and perhaps give advice about the babies, but that is about the extent of her powers. She looked at the paper and as in duty bound filled it in, giving her age as seventy. What was her surprise then to receive promptly from the Department a suggestion that she should volunteer for service on the land, and offering her, by way of inducement, good wages, a becoming hat and high boots! That branch of the Department has evidently become rather mechanical. Now the Russians all the way from Saghalien to Petrograd treated me with such unfailing kindness that I was in danger of writing of them in the stereotyped fashion in which the National Service Department sent out its papers. Luckily they themselves saved me from such an error. There were three memorable, never-to-be-forgotten days when the Russians did not treat me with kindness.

The warmest and pleasantest days of my trip on the Amur we went through lovely scenery: the river was very wide, the blue sky was reflected in its blue waters and the green, tree-clad hills on either side opened out and showed beyond mountains in the distance, purple and blue and alluring. It was the height of summer-time, summer at its best, a green, moist summer. We hugged the Russian bank, and the Manchurian bank seemed very far away, only it was possible to see that wherever the Russians had planted a little town on the other side was a Chinese town much bigger. The Russian were very little towns, and all the inhabitants,

it seemed, turned out to meet us, who were their only link with the outside world.

The minute the steamer came close enough ropes were flung ashore to moor it, and a gangway was run out very often—and it was an anxious moment for me with Buchanan standing on the end, for he was always the first to put dainty little paws on the gangway, and there he stood while it swayed this way and that before it could make up its mind where to finally settle down. Then there was a rush, and a stream of people going ashore for exercise passed a stream of people coming on board to sell goods. Always these took the form of eatables. Butter, bread, meat, milk, berries they had for sale, and the third and fourth class passengers bought eagerly.

I followed Buchanan ashore, but I seldom bought anything unless the berries tempted me. There were strawberries, raspberries and a blue berry which sometimes was very sweet and pleasant.

At first the people had been very kind and taken a great deal of interest in the stranger and her pretty little dog, but after we left Kharbarosvk and I had no one to appeal to a marked change came over things. If I wanted to take a photograph, merely a photograph of the steamer lying against the bank, my camera was rudely snatched away and I was given to understand in a manner that did not require me to know Russian that if I did that again it would be worse for me. Poor little Buchanan was kicked and chunks of wood were flung at him. As I passed along the lower decks to and from the steamer I was rudely hustled, and on shore not only did the people crowd around me in a hostile manner, but to my disgust they spat upon me.

I could not understand the change, for even in the first-class saloon the people looked at me askance. And I had

ten days of the river before I reached Stretensk, where I was to join the train. It is terrible to be alone among hostile people, and I kept Buchanan close beside me for company and because I did not know what might happen to him. If this had been China I should not have been surprised, but Russia, that had always been so friendly. I was mightily troubled.

And then came the explanation, the very simple explanation.

Just as the river narrowed between the hills and looked more like a river, and turned north, there came on board at a tiny wayside town a tall young Cossack officer, a *solnik* of Cossacks, he called himself. He wore a khaki jacket and cap, and dark blue breeches and riding-boots. He had a great scar across his forehead, caused by a Chinese sword, and he had pleasant blue eyes and a row of nice white teeth. He was tall and goodly to look upon, and as I sat at afternoon tea at a little table on deck he came swaggering along the deck and stood before me with one hand on a deck-chair.

"Madame, is it permitted?" he asked in French.

Of course Madame permitted and called for another glass and offered him some of her tea and cake. Possibly he had plenty of his own, but no matter, it was good to entertain someone in friendly fashion again after being an outcast for three days. And it took a little while to find out what was wrong, he was so very polite.

"Madame understands we are at war?"

Madame opened her eyes in astonishment. What could a war in the Balkan Provinces have to do with her treatment on the Amur river thousands of miles in the East?

However, she said she did.

"And Madame knows——" He paused, and then very

kindly abandoned his people. "Madame sees the people are bad?"

Madame quite agreed. They were bad. I had quite an appetite for my tea now that this nice young man was sympathising with me on the abominable behaviour of his countrymen.

He spread out his hands as if deprecating the opinion of such foolish people. "They think—on the ship—and on the shore—that Madame is a GERMAN!"

So it was out, and it took me a moment to realise it, so little had I realised the war.

"A German!" I did not put it in capital letters as he had done. I had not yet learned to hate the Germans.

"A—spy!"

"Oh, good gracious!" And then I flew for my passports.

In vain that young man protested it was not necessary. He had felt sure from the moment he set eyes upon her that Madame was no German. He had told the captain—so the depressed corporal had been taking an interest in me—she might be French, or even from the north of Spain, but certainly not German. But I insisted on his looking at my passports and being in a position to swear that I was British, and from that moment we were friends and he constituted himself my champion.

"The people are bad," he told me. "Madame, they are angry and they are bad. They may harm you. Here I go ashore with you; at Blagoveschensk you get a protection order from the Governor written in Russian so that somebody may read."

Then he told me about the war. Russia and France were fighting Germany. He had come from Tsitsihar, on the Mongolian border, across Manchuria, and before that he had

come from Kodbo, right in the heart of the great Western Mongolian mountains, and he was going as fast as he could to Chita, and thence he supposed to the front.

“C'est gai a la guerre, Madame, c'est gai !” I hope so. I earnestly hope he found it so, for he was a good fellow and awfully good to me.

He was a little disquieting too, for now it dawned upon me it would be impossible to go back through Germany with Germany at war with Russia, and my friend was equally sure it would be almost impossible to go by way of St Petersburg, as we called Petrograd then. Anyhow we were still in the Amur Province, in Eastern Siberia, so I did not worry much. Now that the people were friendly once more it all seemed so far away, and whenever we went ashore my Cossack friend explained matters.

But he was a little troubled.

“Madame, why does not England come in ?” he asked again and again, and I, who had seen no papers since I left Tientsin, and only *The North China Herald* then, could not imagine what England had to do with it. The idea of a world war was out of the question.

It was more interesting now going up the beautiful river, narrowed till it really did look like a river. I could see both banks quite plainly. My friend had been stationed here a year or two before, and he told me that there were many tigers in the woods, and wild boar and bear, but not very many wolves. And the tigers were beautiful and fierce and dangerous, northern tigers that could stand the rigours of the winter, and they did not wait to be attacked, they attacked you. There was a German professor in Blagoveschensk a year or two ago who had gone out butterfly-hunting, which one would think was a harmless and safe enough pastime to satisfy even a conscientious objector,

and a tiger had got on his tracks and eaten him incontinently. They found only his butterfly net and the buttons of his coat when they went in search of him.

The plague had broken out during this officer's stay on the river, and the authorities had drawn a cordon of Cossacks round to keep the terrified, plague-stricken people from fleeing and spreading the disease yet farther, and he pointed out to me the house in which he and two comrades had lived. It was merely a roof pitched at a steep angle, and the low walls were embedded in earth; only on the side facing the river was a little window—it did not open—and a door. A comfortless-looking place it was.

"But why the earth piled up against the sides?" I asked. It was sprouting grass now and yellow buttercups and looked gay and pretty, the only attractive thing about the place.

"Madame, for the cold," said he, "for the cold." And remembering what they had told me about the cold of Kharbin, what I myself had experienced at Manchuria on the way out in much the same latitude as this, I could quite well believe that even sunk in the earth this poor little hut was not a very good protection against the cold.

The river widened again, winding its way across a plateau. On the Chinese side were great oak forests where my Cossack told me were many pig that gave them good hunting and many bees, but this was not China as I knew it. It was inhabited, he said, by nomad tribes who were great horsemen, and we saw occasional villages and—a rare sight—cattle, red and white, standing knee-deep in the clear water. Particularly was I struck by the cattle, for in all those thousands of miles of travel I could count on my fingers—the fingers of one hand would be too many—the numbers of times I saw herds of cattle. Once was in Saghalien, and twice, I think, here, curiously enough, for the pure Chinese does not use

milk or butter on the Chinese side of the river. Of course there must have been cows somewhere, for there was plenty of milk, cream and butter for sale, but they were not in evidence from the river.

On the Russian side the landing-places did not change much, only now among the women hawkers were Chinese in belted blouses, green, yellow, blue, pink, red ; they rioted in colour as they never did in their own land, and they all wore sea-boots.

And still over twelve hundred miles from the sea it was a great river. And then at last I saw what I had been looking for ever since I embarked—fields of corn, corn ripe for the harvest. This was all this lovely land needed, a field of corn ; but again it was not on the Russian side, but on the Chinese.

The spires and domes of Blagoveschensk, the capital of the Amur Province, came into view. All along the Russian bank of the river lay this city of Eastern Siberia. Its buildings stood out against the clear sky behind it, and approaching it was like coming up to a great port. The river, I should think, was at least a mile wide. I am not very good at judging distances, but it gave me the impression of a very wide river set here in the midst of a plain—that is, of course, a plateau, for we had come through the hills.

And here my Cossack friend came to bid me good-bye and to impress upon me once again to go straight to the Governor for that protection order. He was sorry he could not see me through, but his orders were to go to Chita as fast as he could, and someone would speak English at Blagoveschensk, for it was a great city, and then he asked for the last time :

“ But, Madame, why does not England come in ? ”

And then the question that had troubled me so was answered, for as we touched the shore men came on board wild with excitement, shouting, yelling, telling the war news,

that very day, that very moment, it seemed, England had come in !

And I appeared to be the only representative of Britain in that corner of the world ! Never was there such a popular person. The sailor-men who worked the ship, the poorer third and fourth class passengers all came crowding to look at the Englishwoman. I had only got to say "Anglisky" to have everyone bowing down before me and kissing my hand, and my Cossack friend as he bade me good-bye seemed to think it hardly necessary to go to the Governor except that a member of a great Allied nation ought to be properly received.

But I had been bitten once, and I determined to make things as safe as I could for the future. So I got a droshky—a sort of tumble-down victoria, held together with pieces of string, and driven by a man who might have been Russian or might have been Chinese—and Buchanan and I went through the dusty, sunny streets of the capital of the Amur Province to the viceregal residence.

CHAPTER XIII

THE UPPER REACHES OF THE AMUR

BLAGOVESCHENSK is built on much the same lines as all the other Siberian towns that I have seen, a wooden town mostly of one-storeyed houses straggling over the plain in wide streets that cut one another at right angles. Again it was not at all unlike an Australian town, a frontier town to all intents and purposes. The side-roads were deep in dust, and the principal shop, a great store, a sort of mild imitation of Harrod's, where you could buy everything from a needle to an anchor—I bought a dog-collar with a bell for Buchanan—was run by Germans. It was a specimen of Germany's success in peaceful penetration. It seemed as if she were throwing away the meat for the shadow, for they were interning all those assistants—400 of them. Now probably they form the nucleus of the Bolshevik force helping Germany.

The Governor's house was on the outskirts of the town, and it was thronged with people, men mostly, and Buchanan and I were passed from one room to another, evidently by people who had not the faintest notion of what we wanted. Everybody said "*Bonjour*," and the Governor and everybody else kissed my hand. I said I was "*Anglisky*," and it seemed as if everybody in consequence came to look at me. But it didn't advance matters at all.

I began to be hungry and tired, and various people tried questions upon me, but nothing definite happened. At last, after about two hours, when I was seriously thinking of giving up in despair, a tall, good-looking officer in khaki

came in. He put his heels together and kissed my hand as courteously as the rest had done, and then informed me in excellent English that he was the Boundary Commissioner and they had sent for him because there was an English-woman arrived, and, while very desirous of being civil to the representative of their new Ally, nobody could make out what on earth she was doing here and what she wanted !

I told my story and it was easy enough then. He admired Buchanan properly, drove us both to his house, introduced me to his wife and made me out a most gorgeous protection order written in Russian. I have it still, but I never had occasion to use it.

Opposite Blagoveschensk is a Chinese town which is called Sakalin, though the maps never give it that name, and in Vladivostok and Peking they call it various other names. But its right name is Sakalin, I know, for I stayed there for the best part of a week.

At Sakalin the head of the Chinese Customs is a Dane, Paul Barentzen, and to him and his wife am I greatly beholden. I had been given letters to them, and I asked my friend the kindly Russian Boundary Commissioner if he knew them. He did. He explained to me I must have a permit to cross the river and he would give me one for a week. A week seemed overlong, but he explained the Russian Government did not allow free traffic across the river and it was just as well to have a permit that would cover the whole of my stay. Even now, though I did stay my week, I have not fathomed the reason of these elaborate precautions, because it must be impossible to guard every little landing-place on the long, long, lonely river—there must be hundreds of places where it is easy enough to cross—only I suppose every stranger is liable sooner or later to be called upon to give an account of himself.

The ferries that crossed the Amur to the Chinese side were great boats built to carry a large number of passengers, but the arrangements for getting across the river did justice to both Chinese and Russian mismanagement. Unlike the efficient Japanese, both these nations, it seems to me, arrive at the end in view with the minimum amount of trouble to those in authority—that is to say, the maximum of trouble to everybody concerned. The ferry-boats owing to local politics had a monopoly, and therefore went at their own sweet will just exactly when they pleased. There was a large and busy traffic, but the boats never went oftener than once an hour, and the approaches were just as primitive as they possibly could be. There was one little shed with a seat running round where if you were fortunate you could sit down with the Chinese hawkers and wait for the arrival of the boat. And when it did come the passengers, after a long, long wait, came climbing up the rough path up the bank looking as if they had been searched to the skin. They let me through on the Chinese side and I found without any difficulty my way to Mr Paul Barentzen's house, a two-storeyed, comfortable house, and received a warm invitation from him and his wife to stay with them.

It was a chance not to be missed. I was getting very weary, I was tired in every bone, so a chance like this to stay with kindly people who spoke my own language, on the very outskirts of the Chinese Empire, was not to be lightly missed, and I accepted with gratitude, a gratitude I feel strongly. Mr Barentzen was a Dane, but he spoke as good English as I do, and if possible was more British. His wife was English. And that night he celebrated the coming into the war of Britain. He asked me and the Russian Boundary Commissioner and his wife and another Russian gentleman all to dinner in the gardens at Blagoveschensk.

The place was a blaze of light, there were flags and lamps and bands everywhere, the whole city was *en fête* to do honour to the new addition to the Grande Entente. When we were tired of walking about the gardens we went inside to the principal restaurant that was packed with people dining, while on a stage various singers discoursed sweet music and waved the flags of the Allies. But the British flag had not got as far as the capital of the Amur Province. Indeed much farther west than that I found it represented by a red flag with black crosses drawn on it, very much at the taste of the artist, and "Anglisky" written boldly across it to make up for any deficiency.

Mr Barentzen had foreseen this difficulty and had provided us all with nice little silk specimens of the Union Jack to wear pinned on our breasts. About ten o'clock we sat down to a most excellent dinner, with sturgeon and sour cream and caviare and all the good things that Eastern Siberia produces. A packed room also dined, while the people on the stage sang patriotic songs, and we were all given silk programmes as souvenirs. They sang the Belgian, the French and the Russian national anthems, and at last we asked for the British.

Very courteously the conductor sent back word to say he was very sorry but the British national anthem was also a German hymn and if he dared play it the people would tear him to pieces. Remembering my tribulations a little way down the river, I quite believed him, so I suggested as an alternative *Rule, Britannia*, but alas! he had never heard of it. It was a deadlock, and we looked at one another.

Then the tall Russian who was the other guest pushed his chair from the table, stood up, and saluting, whistled *Rule, Britannia*! How the people applauded! And so Britain entered the war in Far Eastern Siberia.

We certainly did not go home till morning that day. For that matter, I don't think you are supposed to cross the river at night, not ordinary folk, Customs officials may have special privileges. At any rate I came back to my bunk on the steamer and an anxious little dog just as the day was breaking, and next day I crossed to Sakalin and stayed with the Barentzens.

The Russians then took so much trouble to keep the Chinese on their own side of the river that the Russian officers and civil servants, much to the chagrin of their wives, were nowhere in the province allowed to have Chinese servants. The fee for a passport had been raised to, I think, twelve roubles, so it was no longer worth a Chinaman's while to get one to hawk a basket of vegetables, and the mines on the Zeya, a tributary of the Amur on the Russian side, had fallen off in their yield because cheap labour was no longer possible. The people who did get passports were the Chinese prostitutes, though a Chinese woman has not a separate identity in China and is not allowed a passport of her own. However, there are ways of getting over that. A man applied for a passport and it was granted him. He handed it over to the woman for a consideration, and on the other side any Chinese document was, as a rule, all one to the Russian official. Remembering my own experience and how I had difficulty in deciding between my passport and my agreement with my muleteers, I could quite believe this story.

Blagoveschensk is a regular frontier town and, according to Mr Barentzen, is unsafe. On the first occasion that I crossed the river with him I produced a hundred-rouble note. Almost before I had laid it down it was snatched up by the Chinese Commissioner of Customs.

"Are you mad?" said he, and he crumpled up the note

in his hand and held out for my acceptance a rouble. I tried to explain that not having change, and finding it a little awkward, I thought that this would be a good opportunity to get it, as I felt sure the man at receipt of custom must have plenty.

"I dare say," said my host sarcastically. "I don't want to take away anybody's character, but I'll venture to say there are at least ten men within hail"—there was a crowd round—"who would joyfully cut your throat for ten roubles."

He enlarged upon that theme later. We used to sit out on the balcony of his house looking out, not over the river, but over the town of Sakalin, and there used to come in the men from the B.A.T. Factory, a Russian in top-boots who spoke excellent English and a young American named Hyde. They told me tales, well, something like the stories I used to listen to in my childhood's days when we talked about "the breaking out of the gold" in Australia, tales of men who had washed much gold and then were lured away and murdered for their riches. Certainly they did not consider Blagoveschensk or Sakalin towns in which a woman could safely wander. In fact all the Siberian towns that they knew came under the ban.

But of course mostly we talked about the war and how maddening it was only to get scraps of news through the telegraph. The young American was keen, I remember. I wonder if he really had patience to wait till his country came in. He talked then in the first week of the war of making his way back to Canada and seeing if he could enlist there, for even then we felt sure that the Outer Dominions would want to help the Motherland. And the Germans were round Liège—would they take it? Association is a curious thing. Whenever I hear of Liège I cannot

help thinking, not of the Belgian city, but of a comfortable seat on a balcony with the shadows falling and the lights coming out one by one on the bath-houses that are dotted about a little town on the very outskirts of the Chinese Empire—the lights of the town. There are the sounds and the smells of the Chinese town mingling with the voices of the talkers and the fragrance of the coffee, and the air is close with the warmth of August. There comes back to me the remembrance of the keen young American who wanted to fight Germany and the young Russian in top-boots who was very much afraid he would only be used to guard German prisoners.

Sakalin was cosmopolitan, but it had a leaning toward Russia, hence the bath-houses, an idea foreign to Chinese civilisation; and when I got a piece of grit in my eye which refused to come out it was to a Japanese doctor I went, accompanied by my host's Chinese servant, who, having had the trouble stated by me in English, explained it to another man in Chinese, who in his turn told the doctor what was the matter in Russian. Luckily that man of medicine was very deft and I expect he could have managed very well without any explanation at all. I have the greatest respect for the Japanese leech I visited in Sakalin.

On the Sunday we had a big picnic. The Russian Boundary Commissioner came across with his wife and little girls, Mrs Barentzen took her little girl and the Chinese Tao Tai lent us the light of his countenance. He was the feature of the entertainment, for he was a very big man, both literally and socially, and could not move without a large following, so that an escort of mounted police took charge of us. The proper portly Chinaman of whom this retinue was in honour spoke no English, but smiled at me benevolently, and wore a petticoat and a Russian military cap! The

picnic was by a little brook about seven miles from the town and I shall always remember it because of the lush grass, waist-high, and the lovely flowers. I had looked at the Siberian flowers from the steamer when they were ungetatable, I had gathered them with joy in Saghalien, and now here they were again just to my hand. In June they told me there were abundant lilies of the valley, and I regretted I had not been there in June. Truly I feel it would be a delight to see lilies of the valley growing wild, but as it was, the flowers were beautiful enough, and there were heaps of them. There were very fine Canterbury bells, a glorious violet flower and magnificent white poppies. Never have I gathered more lovely flowers, never before have I seen them growing wild in such amazing abundance. No one is more truly artistic than the average Chinese, and I think the Tao Tai must have enjoyed himself, though it is against the canons of good taste in China to look about you.

Presently I was asking the chief magistrate's good offices for Buchanan, for he, my treasured Buchanan, was lost. In the Barentzens' house there was, of course, as in all well-regulated Chinese houses run by foreigners, a bathroom attached to every bedroom, and when I wanted a bath the servants filled with warm water the half of a large barrel, which made a very excellent bath-tub. And having bathed myself, I bathed Buchanan, whose white coat got very dirty in the dusty Chinese streets. He ran away downstairs and I lingered for a moment to put on my dress, and when I came down he was gone. High and low I hunted; I went up and down the street calling his name, and I knew he would have answered, he always did, had he been within hearing. All the Customs men were turned out and I went to the Chinese Tao Tai, who promptly put on all the police. But Buchanan was gone for a

night and I was in despair. Mr Barentzen's head boy shook his head.

"Master saying," said he, "mus' get back that dog." So I realised I was making a fuss, but for the moment I did not care. The Tao Tai gave it as his opinion that he had not been stolen. There were many little dogs like him in the town, said he, no one would steal one, which only shows a Chinese magistrate may not be infallible, for I was sure Buchanan would not stay away from me of his own free will.

And then at last the servants turned up triumphant, Buchanan, in the arms of the head boy, wild with delight at seeing his mistress again. The police had searched everywhere, but the servants, with their master's injunction in mind and my reward to be earned, had made further inquiries and found that a little boy had been seen taking the dog into a certain house occupied by an official, the man who was responsible for the cleaning of the streets. This was the first intimation I ever had that the Chinese did clean their streets: I had thought that they left that job to the "wonks" and the scavenger crows. The police made inquiries. No, there was no little dog there. But the servants—wise Chinese servants—made friends with the people round, and they said: "Watch. There is a dog." So a junior servant was put to watch, and when the gate of the compound was opened he stole in, and there was poor little James Buchanan tied up to a post. That servant seized the dog and fled home in triumph.

The T'ai T'ai (the official's wife), said the people round, had wanted the pretty little dog.

I was so delighted to get my little friend back that I should have been content to leave things there. Not so Mr Barentzen. He sent for that official, and there in his drawing-room he and I interviewed a portly Chinese

gentleman in grey petticoats, a long pigtail, a little black silk cap and the tips of the silver shields that encased the long nails of his little fingers just showing beyond his voluminous sleeves.

"An officious servant," he said. He was extremely sorry the Commissioner of Customs and his friend had been put to so much inconvenience. The servant had already been dismissed. And so we bowed him out, face was saved, and all parties were satisfied. It was very Chinese. And yet we knew, and we knew that he must have known we knew, that it was really his wife who received the little dog that everyone concerned must have realised was valuable and must have been stolen.

Here in Sakalin I heard about the doings of the only wolves that came into my wanderings. In the little river harbour were many small steamers flying the Russian flag and loading great barrels with the ends painted bright red. These barrels, explained the Customs Commissioner, contained spirits which the Russians were desirous of smuggling into Russian territory. The Chinese had not the least objection to their leaving China after they had paid export duty. They were taken up and down the river and finally landed at some small port whence they were smuggled across. The trade was a very big one. The men engaged in it were known as the wolves of the Amur and were usually Caucasians and Jews. In 1913, the last year of which I have statistics, no less than twenty-five thousand pounds export was paid on these spirits, and in the years before it used to be greater. I wonder whether with the relaxing of discipline consequent on the war and the revolution the receipts for the export have not gone up.

The wide river was beautiful here, and Blagoveschensk, lying across the water, with its spires and domes, all the

outlines softened, standing against the evening sky, might have been some town of pictured Italy. I am glad I have seen it. I dare not expiate on Mr Barentzen's kindness. My drastic critic, drastic and so invaluable, says that I have already overloaded this book with tales of people's kindness, so I can only say I stayed there a week and then took passage on the smaller steamer which was bound up the Amur and the Shilka to Stretensk and the railway.

I had, however, one regret. I had inadvertently taken my plates and films on which I had all my pictures of the Amur and Saghalien across the Sakalin and I could not take them back again. The Russian rule was very strict. No photographs were allowed. Everything crossing the river must be examined. Now to examine my undeveloped films and plates would be to ruin them. I interviewed a Japanese photographer on the Sakalin side, but he appeared to be a very tyro in the art of developing, and finally very reluctantly I decided to leave them for Mr Barentzen to send home when he got the chance. He did not get that chance till the middle of 1916, and I regret to state that when we came to develop them every single one of them was ruined.

The steamer that I embarked on now was considerably smaller, for the river was narrowing. The deck that ran round the cabins was only thirty inches wide and crowded with children; worse, when James Buchanan and I went for our daily promenades we found the way disputed by women, mothers, or nursemaids, I know not which, propelling the children who could not walk in wheeled chairs, and they thought Buchanan had been brought there for their special benefit, a view which the gentleman himself did not share. However, he was my only means of communication with them, for they had no English or French.

But I was lucky, for one of the mates, brass-bound and in spotless white, like so many Russians had served in British ships and spoke English very well with a slight Scots accent. With him I used to hold daily conversations and always we discussed the war. But he shook his head over it. It was not possible to get much news at the little wayside places at which we stopped. There were no papers—the Russian peasant under the beneficent rule of the Tsar was not encouraged to learn to read—and for his part he, the mate, put no faith in the telegrams. All would be well, of course, but we must wait till we came to some large and influential place for news upon which we could rely.

But that large and influential place was long in coming, in fact I may say it never materialised while I was on the river. There are at least eleven towns marked on the way between Blagoveschensk and Stretensk, but even the town at the junction where the Aigun and the Shilka merge into the Amur is but a tiny frontier village, and the rest as I know the river banks are only a few log huts inhabited by peasants who apparently keep guard over and supply the stacks of wood needed by the steamers.

It was a lovely river now going north, north and then west, or rather we went north, the river flowed the other way, it was narrower and wound between wooded hills and it was very lonely. There were occasional, very occasional, little settlements, on the Chinese side I do not remember even a hut, though it was a lovely green land and the river, clear as crystal, reflected on its breast the trees and rocks among which we made our way.

Once on the Russian side we landed from a boat a woman with two little children and innumerable bundles. They had been down, I suppose, to visit the centre of civilisation at Blagoveschensk and now were coming home. In the dusk

of the evening we left her there looking down thoughtfully at her encumbrances, not a living creature in sight, not a sign of man's handiwork anywhere. I hoped there were no tigers about, but she has always lived in my memory as an unfinished story. I suppose we all of us have those unfinished stories in our lives, not stories left unfinished because they are so long drawn out we could not possibly wait for developments, but stories that must finish suddenly, only we are withdrawn. Once I looked from a railway carriage window in the Midlands and I saw a bull chasing a woman; she was running, screaming for all she was worth, for a fence, but whether she reached it or not I have no means of knowing. Another time I saw also from a railway carriage window two men, mother naked, chasing each other across the greensward and left them there because the train went on. Of course I have often enough seen men without clothes in the tropics, but in the heart of England they are out of the picture and want explaining. That explanation I shall never get. Nor is it likely I shall ever know whether that unknown woman and her little children ever reached their unknown home.

We were luxuriously fed upon that little steamer. The Russian tea with lemon and the bread and butter were delicious, and we had plenty of cream, though gone was the red caviare that farther east had been so common. But I was tired and at last feeling lonely. I began to count the days till I should reach home.

On the Amur the weather had been gorgeous, but when we entered the Shilka we were north of 53° again and well into the mountains, and the next morning I awoke to a grey day. It rained and it rained, not tropical rain, but soft, penetrating rain; the fir-clad hills on either side were veiled in a silvery mist. The river wound so that as we looked

ahead we seemed to be sailing straight into the hills. The way looked blocked with hills, sometimes all mist-covered, sometimes with the green showing alluringly through the mist, and occasionally, when the mist lifted and the sun came out, in all the gullies would linger little grey cloudlets, as if caught before they could get away and waiting there screened by the hills till the mist should fall again. Occasionally there were lonely houses, still more occasionally little settlements of log huts with painted windows hermetically sealed, and once or twice a field of corn ripe for the harvest but drowned by the persistent rain. But the air was soft and delicious, divine; only in the cabins on board the crowded steamer was it pestilential. The mate told me how, six weeks before, on his last trip up, an Englishman had come selling reapers and binders, and he thought that now I had made my appearance the English were rather crowding the Amur.

Sometimes when we stopped the passengers went ashore and went berrying, returning with great branches laden with fruit, and I and Buchanan too walked a little way, keeping the steamer well in sight, and rejoicing in the flowers and the green and the rich, fresh smell of moist earth. I do not know that ever in my life do I remember enjoying rain so much. Of course in my youth in Australia I had always welcomed the life-giving rain, but thirteen years in England, where I yearned for the sunshine, had somehow dimmed those memories, and now once again the rain on the river brought me joy. The mist was a thing of beauty, and when a ray of sunshine found its way into a green, mist-veiled valley, illuminating its lovely loneliness, then indeed I knew that the earth was the Lord's and the fullness thereof.

Sometimes we passed rafts upon the river. They were logs bound together in great parallelograms and worked

with twelve long sweeps fixed at each end. Twelve men at least went to each raft, and there were small houses built of grass and canvas and wood. They were taking the wood down to Nikolayeusk to be shipped to Shanghai and other parts of the world for furniture, for these great forests of birch and elm and fir and oak must be a mine of wealth to their owners. I do not know whether the wood is cut on any system, and whether the presence of these great rafts had anything to do with the many dead trees I saw in the forests, their white stems standing up ghostlike against the green hill-side.

I have no record of these lovely places. My camera was locked away now in my suit-case, for it was war, and Russia, rightly, would allow no photographs.

Seven days after we left Blagoveschensk we reached Stretensk and I came in contact for the first time with the World's War.

CHAPTER XIV

MOBILISING IN EASTERN SIBERIA

AT Stretensk I awakened to the fact that I was actually in Siberia, nay, that I had travelled over about two thousand miles of Siberia, that dark and gloomy land across which—I believed in my youth—tramped long lines of prisoners in chains, sometimes amidst the snow and ice of a bitter winter, sometimes with the fierce sun beating down upon them, but always hopeless, always hungry, weary, heart-broken, a sacrifice to the desire for political liberty that was implanted in the hearts of an enslaved people.

It is an extraordinary thing that, though for many years I had believed Saghalien was a terrible island, a sort of inferno for political prisoners, something like Van Diemen's Land used to be in the old convict days one hundred and ten years ago, only that in the Asiatic island the conditions were still more cruel and it was hopeless to think of escaping, while I was actually in that beautiful island I was so taken up with its charm, it was so extremely unlike the place of which I had a picture in my mind's eye, that I hardly connected the two. All up the Amur river was a new land, a land crying out for pioneers, pastoralists and farmers, so that the thought that was uppermost in my mind was of the contrast between it and the old land of China, where I had spent so long a time; but at Stretensk I suddenly remembered this was Siberia, the very heart of Siberia, where men had suffered unutterable things, might still be so suffering for all I knew, and I stepped off the steamer and prepared

to explore, with a feeling that at any moment I might come across the heavy logs that made up the walls of a prison, might see the armed sentries, clad to the eyes in furs, who tramped amidst the snow. But this was August and it was fiercely hot, so the snow and the sentries clad in furs were ruled out, and presently as Buchanan and I walked about the town even the lonely prison built of logs had to go too. There may have been a prison, probably there was, but it did not dominate the picture. Not here should I find the Siberia I had been familiar with from my youth up.

Stretensk is like all other Siberian towns that I have seen. The houses are mostly of one storey and of wood, of logs; the streets are wide and straight, cutting each other at right angles, and the whole is flung out upon the plain; it is really, I think, rather high among the mountains, but you do not get the sensation of hills as you do from the steamer.

The rain had cleared away and it was very hot, though we had started out very early because I was determined to go west if possible that very afternoon. We went gingerly because the dangers of Siberian towns for one who looked fairly prosperous had been impressed upon me at Blagoveschensk, and I hesitated about going far from the steamer, where the mate could speak English. Still we went. I was not going to miss the Siberia of my dreams if I could help it.

I saw something more wonderful than the Siberia of my dreams.

In consequence of the ceaseless rain the roads between the log-houses with their painted windows were knee-deep in mud, a quagmire that looked impassable. In the air was the sound of martial music, and up and down in what would have been reckless fashion but for the restraining glue-like mud galloped officers and their orderlies. It was the war, the first I had seen of it. The war was taking the place of

the political exiles, and instead of seeing Siberia as a background for the exiles as I had dreamed of it for so many years, I saw it busy with preparations for war. The roads were like sloughs out of which it would have been impossible to get had I ever ventured in. Naturally I did not venture, but took all sorts of long rounds to get to the places I wanted to reach. It is not a bad way of seeing a town.

The heavily built houses, built to defy the Siberian winter, might have come out of Nikolayeusk or Kharbarosvk, and though the sun poured down out of a cloudless sky, and I was gasping in a thin Shantung silk, they were hermetically sealed, and the cotton wool between the double windows was decorated with the usual gay ribbons. I dare say they were cool enough inside, but they must have been intolerably stuffy. The sidewalks too had dried quickly in the fierce sunshine. They were the usual Siberian sidewalks, with long lines of planks like flooring. Had they ever been trodden, I wonder, by the forced emigrant looking with hopeless longing back to the West. Finally we wandered into the gardens, where I doubt not, judging by the little tables and many seats, there was the usual gay throng at night, but now early in the morning everything looked dishevelled, and I could not find anyone to supply me with the cool drink of which I stood so badly in need, and at last we made our way back to the steamer, where the mate, having got over the struggle of arrival—for this was the farthest the steamer went—kindly found time enough to give himself to my affairs. I wanted a droshky to take me to the train, and as nowhere about had I seen any signs of a railway station I wanted to know where it was.

The mate laughed and pointed far away down the river on the other side. I really ought to have known my Siberia better by now. Railways are not constructed for the con-

venience of the townsfolk. There was nothing else for it. I had to get there somehow, and as the train left somewhere between five and six, about noon, with the mate's assistance, I engaged a droshky. The carriages that are doing a last stage in this country are not quite so elderly here as they are in Saghalien, but that is not saying much for them. The one the mate engaged for me had a sturdy little un-groomed horse in the shafts and another running in a trace alongside. On the seat was packed all my baggage, two small suit-cases and a large canvas sack into which I dumped rugs, cushions and all odds and ends, including my precious kettles, and the rough little unkempt horses towed us down through the sea of mud to the ferry, and then I saw the scene had indeed shifted. It was not long lines of exiles bearing chains I met, that was all in the past, at least for an outsider like me, but here in the heart of Asia Russia in her might was collecting her forces for a spring. The great flat ferry was crossing and recrossing, and down the swamp that courtesy called a road came endless streams of square khaki-coloured carts, driven by men in flat caps and belted khaki blouses, big fair men, often giants with red, sun-tanned faces and lint-white hair, men who shouted and laughed and sang and threw up their caps, who were sober as judges and yet were wild with excitement; they were going to the war. I could not understand one word they said, but there is no mistaking gladness, and these men were delighted with their lot. I wondered was it a case of the prisoner freed or was it that life under the old regime in a Russian village was dull to monotony and to these recruits was coming the chance of their lifetime.

Some will never come east again, never whether in love or hate will they see the steppes and the flowers and the golden sunshine and the snow of Siberia, they have left their

bones on those battle-fields ; but some, I hope, will live to see the regeneration of Russia, when every man shall have a chance of freedom and happiness. I suppose this revolution was in the air as cart after cart drove on to the ferry and the men yelled and shouted in their excitement. A small company of men who were going east looked at them tolerantly—I'm sure it was tolerantly—and then they too caught the infection and yelled in chorus.

I watched it all with interest.

Then half-an-hour passed and still they came ; an hour, and I grew a little worried, for they were still pouring over. Two hours—I comforted myself, the train did not start till late in the afternoon—three hours, and there was no cessation in the stream. And of course I could make no one understand. It looked as if I might wait here all night. At last a man who was manifestly an officer came galloping along and him I addressed in French.

“ Is it possible to cross on the ferry ? ”

He was very courteous.

“ It is not possible to cross, Madame. It is not possible. The soldiers come first.”

I took another look at the good-humoured, strapping, fair-haired soldiers in khaki, with their khaki-coloured carts. The ferry crossing was laden with them, hundreds of others were waiting, among them numbers of country people. They had bundles and laden baskets and looked people who had shopped and wanted to go home again. Were these exiles ? I did not know. They looked simple peasants. Whoever they were, there did not seem much chance for them or me, and I said the one Russian word I knew, “ Steamer,” and indicated that I wanted to go back there. Much as I wanted to go home, tired as I was of travelling, I decided I would postpone my railway journey for a day and

take advantage of that comfortable Russian custom that allows you to live on a steamer for two days while she is in port. The *ishvornik* nodded, back we went helter-skelter to the wharf and—the steamer was gone !

I have had some bad moments in my life, but that one stands out still. Why, I hardly know, for sitting here in my garden it does not seem a very terrible thing. I had plenty of money in my pocket and there were hotels in the town. But no ! more than ever, safe here in Kent, do I dread a Siberian hotel ! Then I was distinctly afraid. I might so easily have disappeared and no one would have asked questions for months to come. I tried to tell the boy I wanted to go to one of those dreaded hotels—I felt I would have to risk it, for I certainly could not spend the night in a droshky—and I could not make him understand. Perhaps, as in Saghalien, there were no hotels to accommodate a woman of my class, or perhaps, as is most probable, they were all full of soldiers, anyhow he only looked at me blankly, and Buchanan and I looked at each other. Buchanan anyhow had no fears. He was quite sure I could take care of him. I looked at the boy again and then, as if he had suddenly had an inspiration, he drove me back to the place opposite the ferry whence we had come. The soldiers were there still, crowds and crowds of them, with their little carts and horses, and they were amusing themselves by stealing each other's fodder ; the ferry had come back, but there were no soldiers on it, only the country people were crowding down. I had been forbidden to go upon it, and never should I have dreamt of disobeying orders, but my driver had different views. He waited till no officer was looking, seized my baggage and flung it down on the great ferry right in front of the military stores, beside the refreshment stall where they were selling sausages and bread in

round rings such as peasants eat, and tea and lemonade. I had not expected to find so commonplace a thing on a river in Siberia. Now I had sat in that dilapidated carriage for over four hours and I was weary to death, also I could not afford to be parted from my luggage, so I put Buchanan under my arm—it was too muddy for him to walk—and followed as fast as I could. My good angel prompted me to pay that driver well. I paid him twice what the mate had said it ought to cost me if I waited half-a-day, and never have I laid out money to better advantage. He turned to a big man who was standing by, a man in sea-boots, a red belted blouse and the tall black Astrakhan cap that I have always associated in my own mind with Circassians, and spoke to him, saying “Anglisky.” Evidently he said it might be worth his while to look after me. I don’t know whether this gentleman was a Caucasian, one of the “wolves of the Amur,” but whoever he was, he was a very hefty and capable individual, with a very clear idea of what a foreign lady ought to do, and he promptly constituted himself my guardian.

After all, the world, take it on the whole, is a very kindly, honest place. So many times have I been stranded when I might quite easily have been stripped of everything, and always some good Samaritan has come to my aid, and the reward, though I did my best, has never been commensurate with the services rendered.

The ferry across the Shilka at Stretensk is a great affair, like a young paddock afloat, and beside the horses and carts upon it were a number of country people with their bundles. I sat there a little uncomfortably because I did not know what would happen, only I was determined not to be parted from my baggage. Presently the huge float drifted off, amidst wild shouts and yells. When I was there, a great

deal in Russia was done to the accompaniment of much shouting, and I rather fancy that this ferry was going off on an unauthorised jaunt of its own. The Shilka is a broad river here, a fortnight's steamer journey from its mouth, but the ferry came to a full stop in the middle of the stream and a motor boat which did not look as if it could hold half the people came alongside.

"Skurry ! Skurry !" was the cry, and the people began leaping overboard into the boat. The military were getting rid summarily of their civilian crowd. In a few seconds that boat was packed to the gunwales and I was looking over at it. I had Buchanan under my arm ; he was always a good little dog at critical moments, understanding it was his part to keep quiet and give as little trouble as possible. In my other hand I had my despatch-case, and, being anything but acrobatic by temperament, I felt it was hopeless to think of getting into it. If the penalty for not doing so had been death, I do not think I could have managed it. However, I didn't have a say in the matter. The big Russian in the red blouse picked me up and dropped me, little dog, box and all, into the boat, right on top of the people already there. First I was on top, and then, still hanging on to my little dog, I slipped down a little, but my feet found no foothold ; I was wedged between the screaming people. After me, with my luggage on his shoulder, came my guardian, and he somehow seemed to find a very precarious foothold on the gunwale, and he made me understand he wanted two roubles for our fares. If he had asked for ten he would have got it, but how I managed to get at my money to this day I do not know. The boat rocked and swayed in a most alarming manner, and I thought to myself, Well, we are on top now, but presently the boat will upset and then we shall certainly be underneath. I gathered that the passengers

were disputing with the boatman as to the price to be paid for the passage across, though this was unwise, for the ferry was threatening momentarily to crush us against the rocky bank. He was asking sixty kopecks—a little over a shilling—and with one voice they declared that forty was enough. Considering the crowd, forty I should have thought would have paid him excellently. That I had given my guardian more did not trouble me, because any extra he earned was more than justified, for one thing was certain, I could never have tackled the job by myself.

Just as I was growing desperate and Buchanan began to mention that he was on the verge of suffocation the difficulty of the fares was settled and we made for the bank. But we did not go to the usual landing-stage; that, I presume, was forbidden as sacred to the soldiers, and we drew up against a steep, high bank faced with granite.

“Scurry! Scurry!” And more than ever was haste necessary, for it looked as if the great ferry would certainly crush us. The people began scrambling up. But I was helpless. Whatever happened, I knew I could never climb that wall. I could only clutch my little dog and await events. My guardian was quite equal to the situation. The boat had cleared a little and there was room to move, and, dropping the baggage, he picked me up like a baby and tossed me, dog and all, up on to the bank above. Whether that boat got clear away from the ferry I do not know. When I visited the place next morning there were no remains, so I presume she did, but at the time I was giving all my attention to catching a train.

My guardian engaged a boy to carry the lighter baggage, and shouldering the rest himself, he took me by the arm and fairly raced me up the steep incline to the railway station that was a seething mass of khaki-clad men.

"Billet ! Billet !" said he, wiping the sweat from his streaming face and making a way for me among the thronging recruits. There was a train coming in and he evidently intended I should catch it.

Such a crowd it was, and in the railway station confusion was worse confounded. It was packed with people—people of the poorer class—and with soldiers, and everyone was giving his opinion of things in general at the top of his voice. My stalwart guardian elbowed a way to the pigeon-hole, still crying, "Billet ! Billet !" and I, seeing I wanted a ticket to Petrograd, produced a hundred-rouble note. The man inside pushed it away with contumely and declined it in various unknown tongues. I offered it again, and again it was thrust rudely aside, my guardian becoming vehement in his protests, though what he said I have not the faintest idea. I offered it a third time, then a man standing beside me whisked it away and whisked me away too.

"Madame, are you mad ?" he asked, as Mr Barentzen had asked over a week before, but he spoke in French, very Russian French. And then he proceeded to explain volubly that all around were thieves, robbers and assassins—oh ! the land of suffering exiles—the mobilisation had called them up, and any one of them would cut my throat for a good deal less than a ten-pound note. And he promptly shoved the offending cash in his pocket. It was the most high-handed proceeding I have ever taken part in, and I looked at him in astonishment. He was a man in a green uniform, wearing a military cap with pipings of white and magenta, and the white and magenta were repeated on the coat and trousers. On the whole, the effect was reassuring. A gentleman so attired was really too conspicuous to be engaged in any very nefarious occupation.

He proceeded to explain that by that train I could not go.

It was reserved for the troops. They were turning out the people already in it. This in a measure explained the bedlam in the station. The people who did not want to be landed here and the people who wanted to get away were comparing notes, and there were so many of them they had to do it at the top of their voices.

"When does the next train go?" I asked.

My new friend looked dubious. "Possibly to-morrow night," said he. That was cheering.

"And where is there a hotel?"

He pointed across the river to Stretensk.

"Are there none this side?"

"No, Madame, not one."

I debated. Cross that river again after all it had cost me to get here I could not.

"But where can I stay?"

He looked round as if he were offering palatial quarters.

"Here, Madame, here."

In the railway station; there was nothing else for it; and in that railway station I waited till the train came in the following evening.

That little matter settled, I turned to reward my first friend for his efforts on my behalf, and I felt five roubles was little enough. My new friend was very scornful, a rouble was ample, he considered. He had my ten-pound note in his pocket, and I am afraid I was very conscious that he had not yet proved himself, whereas the other man had done me yeoman's service, and never have I parted with ten shillings with more satisfaction. They were certainly earned.

After, I set myself to make the best of the situation. The station was crowded with all sorts and conditions of people, and a forlorn crowd they looked, and curious was

the flotsam and jetsam that were their belongings. Of course there was the usual travellers' baggage, but there were other things too I did not expect to come across in a railway station in Siberia. There was a sewing-machine; there was the trumpet part of a gramophone; there was the back of a piano with all the wires showing; there was a dressmaker's stand, the stuffed form of a woman, looking forlorn and out of place among the bundles of the soldiers.

But the people accepted it as all in the day's work, watched the soldiers getting into the carriages from which they were debarred, and waved their hands and cheered them, though the first train that started for anywhere did not leave till one-fifteen A.M. next morning. They were content that the soldiers should be served first. They settled themselves in little companies on the open platform, in the refreshment-room, in the waiting-rooms, fathers, mothers, children and dogs, and they solaced themselves with kettles of tea, black bread and sausages.

It was all so different from what I had expected, so very different, but the first effect was to bring home to me forcibly the fact that there was a great struggle going on in the West, and Eastern Siberia was being drawn into the whirlpool, sending her best, whether they were the exiles of my dreams or the thieves and robbers my newest friend had called them, to help in the struggle! To wait a night and day in a railway station was surely a little sacrifice to what some must make. How cheerfully and patiently that Siberian crowd waited! There were no complaints, no moans, only here and there a woman buried her head in her shawl and wept for her nearest and dearest, gone to the war, gone out into the unknown, and she might never see him again, might never even know what became of him. Truly "They also serve who only stand and wait."

I went into the refreshment-room to get some food, and had soup with sour cream in it, and ate chicken and bread and butter and cucumber and drank *kvass* as a change from the eternal tea. I watched the people on the platform and as the shades of night fell began to wonder where I should sleep. I would have chosen the platform, but it looked as if it might rain, so I went into the ladies' waiting-room, dragged a seat across the open window, and spread out my rugs and cushions and established myself there. I wanted to have first right to that window, for the night up in the hills here was chilly and I felt sure somebody would come in and want to shut it. My intuitions were correct. Buchanan and I kept that open window against a crowd. Everybody who came in—and the room was soon packed—wanted to shut it. They stretched over me and I arose from my slumbers and protested. For, in addition to a crowd, the sanitary arrangements were abominable, and what the atmosphere would have been like with the window shut I tremble to think. I remembered the tales of the pestilential resthouses into which the travelling exiles had been thrust, and I was thankful for that window, thankful too that it was summer-time, for in winter I suppose we would have had to shut it. At last one woman pulled at my rugs and said—though I could not understand her language her meaning was plain enough—that it was all very well for me, I had plenty of rugs, it was they who had nothing. It was a fair complaint, so with many qualms I shared my rugs and the summer night slowly wore to morning.

And morning brought its own difficulties. Russian washing arrangements to me are always difficult. I had met them first in Kharbin in the house of Mr Poland. I wrestled with the same thing in the house of the Chief of Police in Saghalien, and I met it in an aggravated form here

in the railway station waiting-room. A Russian basin has not a plug—it is supposed to be cleaner to wash in running water—and the tap is a twirly affair with two spouts, and on pressing a little lever water gushes out of both and, theoretically, you may direct it where you please. Practically I found that while I was directing one stream of water down on to my hands, the other hit me in the eye or the ear, and when I got that right the first took advantage of inattention and deluged me round the waist. It may be my inexperience, but I do not like Russian basins. It was running water with a vengeance, it all ran away.

However, I did the best I could, and after, as my face was a little rough and sore from the hot sun of the day before, I took out a jar of hazeline cream and began to rub it on my cheeks. This proceeding aroused intense interest in the women around. What they imagined the cream was for I don't know, but one and all they came and begged some, and as long as that pot held out every woman within range had hazeline cream daubed on her weather-beaten cheeks, and they omitted to rub it off, apparently considering it ornamental. However, hazeline cream is a pleasant preparation.

Having dressed, Buchanan and I had the long day before us, and I did not dare leave the railway station to explore because I was uneasy about my luggage. I had had it put in the corner of the refreshment-room and as far as I could see no one was responsible for it, and as people were coming and going the livelong day I felt bound to keep an eye upon it. I also awaited with a good deal of interest the gentleman with the variegated uniform and my ten-pound note. He came at last, and explained in French that he had got the change but he could not give it to me till the train came in because of the thieves and robbers, as if he would

insist upon tearing the veil of romance I had wrapped round Siberia. And God forgive me that I doubted the honesty of a very kindly, courteous gentleman.

It was a long, long day because there was really nothing to do save to walk about for Buchanan's benefit, and I diversified things by taking odd meals in the refreshment-room whenever I felt I really must do something. But I was very tired. I began to feel I had been travelling too long, and I really think if it had not been for Buchanan's sympathy I should have wept. No one seemed at all certain when the next train west might be expected, opinions, judging by fingers pointing at the clock, varying between two o'clock in the afternoon and three o'clock next morning. However, as the evening shadows were beginning to fall a train did come in, and my friend in uniform, suddenly appearing, declared it was the western train. Taking me by the hand, he led me into a carriage and, shutting the door and drawing down the blinds, placed in my hands change for my ten-pound note.

"Guard your purse, Madame," said he, "guard your purse. There are thieves and robbers everywhere!"

So all the way across Siberia had I been warned of the unsafe condition of the country. At Kharbin, at Nikolayeusk, at Blagoveschensk men whose good faith I could not doubt assured me that a ten-pound note and helplessness was quite likely to spell a sudden and ignominious end to my career, and this was in the days when no one doubted the power of the Tsar, a bitter commentary surely on an autocracy. What the condition of Siberia must be now, with rival factions fighting up and down the land, and released German prisoners throwing the weight of their strength in with the Bolshevists, I tremble to think.

When he made sure I had carefully hidden my money

and thoroughly realised the gravity of the situation, my friend offered to get my ticket, a second-class ticket, he suggested. I demurred. I am not rich and am not above saving my pennies, but a first-class ticket was so cheap, and ensured so much more privacy, that a second-class was an economy I did not feel inclined to make. He pointed round the carriage in which we were seated. Was this not good enough for anyone? It was. I had to admit it, and the argument was clinched by the fact that there was not a first-class carriage on the train. The ticket only cost about five pounds and another pound bought a ticket for Buchanan. We got in—my friend in need got in with me, that misjudged friend; it seemed he was the stationmaster at a little place a little way down the line—and we were fairly off on our road to the West.

CHAPTER XV

ON A RUSSIAN MILITARY TRAIN

I WAS in the train at last, fairly on my way home, and I was glad. But I wasn't glad for very long. I began to wish myself back in the railway station at Stretensk, where at least I had fresh air. At first I had the window open and a corner seat. There are only two people on a seat in a Russian long-distance train, because when night falls they let down the seat above, which makes a bunk for the second person. But I was second class and my compartment opened without a door into the other compartments in the carriage, also two more bunks appeared crossways, and they were all filled with people. We were four women, two men who smoked, a baby who cried, and my little dog. I spread out my rugs and cushions, and when I wanted the window open the majority were against me. Not only was the window shut, but every ventilating arrangement was tightly closed also, and presently the atmosphere was pestilential. I grew desperate. I wandered out of the carriage and got on to the platform at the end, where the cold wind—for all it was August—cut me like a knife. The people objected to that cold wind coming in, and the next time I wandered out for a breath of fresh air I found the door barred and no prayers of mine would open it. In that carriage the people were packed like sardines, but though I was three-quarters suffocated no one else seemed at all the worse. I couldn't have looked at breakfast next morning, but the rest of the company preened themselves and fed cheerfully

from the baskets they carried. Then at last I found a student going to a Western Siberian university who spoke a little French and through him I told the authorities that if I could not be transferred to a first-class carriage I was to be left behind at the next station. I had spent a night in a station and I knew all about it; it wasn't nice, but it was infinitely preferable to a night in a crowded second-class carriage.

After a little while the train master came and with the aid of the student informed me that there would be a first-class carriage a little farther on and if there was room I should go in it, also we would know in an hour or so.

So I bore up, and at a little town in the hills I was taken to a first-class compartment. There were three—that is, six bunks—making up half of a second-class carriage, and they were most luxurious, with mirrors and washing arrangements complete. The one I entered was already occupied by a very stout woman who, though we did not know any tongue in common, made me understand she was going to a place we would reach next morning for an operation, and she apologised—most unnecessarily but most courteously—for making me take the top bunk. She had a big Irish setter with her whom she called “Box”—“Anglisky,” as she said—and “Box” was by no means as courteous and friendly as his mistress, and not only objected to Buchanan's presence but said so in no measured terms. I had to keep my little dog up on the top bunk all the time, where he peered over and whimpered protestingly at intervals. There was one drawback, and so kind and hospitable was my stable companion that I hardly liked to mention it, but the atmosphere in that compartment you could have cut with a knife. Wildly I endeavoured to open the windows, and she looked at me in astonishment. But I was so vehement that the

student was once more brought along to interpret, and then everybody took a turn at trying to open that window. I must say I think it was exceedingly kind and hospitable of them, for these people certainly shrank from the dangers of a draught quite as much as I did from the stuffiness of a shut window. But it was all to no purpose. That window had evidently never been opened since the carriage was made and it held on gallantly to the position it had taken up. They consulted together, and at length the student turned to me :

“Calm yourself, Madame, calm yourself; a man will come with an instrument.” And three stations farther down the line a man did appear with an instrument and opened that window, and I drew in deep breaths of exceedingly dusty fresh air.

The lady in possession and I shared our breakfast. She made the tea, and she also cleaned out the kettle by the simple process of emptying the tea leaves into the wash-hand basin. That, as far as I saw, was the only use she made of the excellent washing arrangements supplied by the railway. But it is not for me to carp, she was so kind, and bravely stood dusty wind blowing through the compartment all night just because I did not like stuffiness. And when she was gone, O luxury! Buchanan and I had the carriage to ourselves all the way to Irkutsk.

And this was Siberia. We were going West, slowly it is true, but with wonderful swiftness I felt when I remembered—and how should I not remember every moment of the time?—that this was the great and sorrowful road along which the exiles used to march, that the summer sun would scorch them, these great plains would be snow-covered and the biting, bitter wind would freeze them long before they reached their destination. I looked ahead into the West

longingly ; but I was going there, would be there in less than a fortnight at the most, while their reluctant feet had taken them slowly, the days stretched into weeks, the weeks into months, and they were still tramping east into an exile that for all they knew would be lifelong. Ah ! but this road must have been watered with blood and tears. Every river, whether they were ferried over it or went across on the ice, must have seemed an added barrier to the man or woman thinking of escape ; every forest would mean for them either shelter or danger, possibly both, for I had not forgotten the tigers of the Amur and the bears and wolves that are farther west. And yet the steppes, those hopeless plains, must have afforded still less chance of escape.

Oh ! my early ideas were right after all. Nature was jailer enough here in Siberia. Men did escape, we know, but many more must have perished in the attempt, and many, many must have resigned themselves to their bitter fate, for surely all the forces of earth and air and sky had ranged themselves on the side of the Tsar. This beautiful country, and men had marched along it in chains !

At Chita, greatly to my surprise, my *sotnik* of Cossacks joined the train, and we greeted each other as old friends. Indeed I was pleased to see his smiling face again, and Buchanan benefited largely, for many a time when I was not able to take him out for a little run our friend came along and did it for us.

The platforms at Siberian stations are short and this troop train, packed with soldiers, was long, so that many a time our carriage never drew up at the platform at all. This meant that the carriage was usually five feet from the ground, and often more. I am a little woman and five feet was all I could manage, when it was more it was beyond me. Of course I could have dropped down, but it would have

been impossible to haul myself up again, to say nothing of getting Buchanan on board. A Russian post train—and this troop train was managed to all intents and purposes as a post train—stops at stations along the line so that the passengers may get food, and five minutes before it starts it rings a “Make ready” bell one minute before it rings a second bell, “Take your seats,” and with a third bell off the train goes. And it would have gone inexorably even though I, having climbed down, had been unable to climb up again. Deeply grateful then were Buchanan and I to the *sotnik* of Cossacks, who recognised our limitations and never forgot us.

I liked these Russian post trains far better than the train *de luxe*, with its crowd and its comforts and its cosmopolitan atmosphere. A Russian post train in those days had an atmosphere of its own. It was also much cheaper. From Stretensk to Petrograd, including Buchanan, the cost was a little over nine pounds for the tickets, and I bought my food by the way. It was excellent and very cheap. All the things I had bought in Kharbin, especially the kettles, came into use once more. The moment the train stopped out tumbled the soldiers, crowds and crowds of them, and raced for the provision stalls and for the large boilers full of water that are a feature of every Russian station on the overland line. These boilers are always enclosed in a building just outside the railway station, and the spouts for the boiling water, two, three and sometimes four in a row, come out through the walls. Beside every spout is an iron handle which, being pulled, brings the boiling water gushing out. Russia even in those days before the revolution struck me as strangely democratic, for the soldiers, the non-commissioned officers, the officers and everyone else on the train mingled in the struggle for hot water. I could never have got mine

filled, but my Cossack friend always remembered me and if he did not come himself sent someone to get my kettles. Indeed everyone vied in being kind to the Englishwoman, to show, I think, their good will to the only representative of the Allied nation on the train.

It was at breakfast-time one warm morning I first made the acquaintance of "that very great officer," as the others called him, the captain of the *Askold*. He was in full naval uniform, and at that time I was not accustomed to seeing naval officers in uniform outside their ships, and he was racing along the platform, a little teapot in one hand, intent on filling it with hot water to make coffee. He was not ashamed to pause and come to the assistance of a foreigner whom he considered the peasants were shamefully overcharging. They actually wanted her to pay a farthing a piece for their largest cucumbers! He spoke French and so we were able to communicate, and he was kind enough to take an interest in me and declare that he himself would provide me with cucumbers. He got me four large ones and when I wanted to repay him he laughed and said it was hardly necessary as they only cost a halfpenny! He had the compartment next to mine and that morning he sent me in a glass of coffee—we didn't run to cups on that train. Excellent coffee it was too. Indeed I was overwhelmed with provisions. One woman does not want very much to eat, but unless I supplied myself liberally and made it patent to all that I had enough and more than enough I was sure to be supplied by my neighbours out of friendship for my nation. From the Cossack officer, from a Hussar officer and his wife who had come up from Ugra in Mongolia, and from the captain of the *Askold* I was always receiving presents. Chickens, smoked fish—very greasy, in a sheet of paper, eaten raw and very excellent—raspberries

and blue berries, to say nothing of cucumbers, were rained upon me.

At some stations there was a buffet and little tables set about where the first and second class passengers could sit down and have *déjeuner*, or dinner, but oftener, especially in the East, we all dashed out, first, second and third class, and at little stalls presided over by women with kerchiefs on their heads and sturdy bare feet, women that were a joy to me after the effete women of China, bought what we wanted, took it back with us into the carriages and there ate it. I had all my table things in a basket, including a little saucer for Buchanan. It was an exceedingly economical arrangement, and I have seldom enjoyed food more. The bread and butter was excellent. You could buy fine white bread, and bread of varying quality to the coarse black bread eaten by the peasant, and I am bound to say I very much like fine white bread. There was delicious cream; there were raspberries and blue berries to be bought for a trifle; there were lemons for the tea; there was German beet sugar; there were roast chickens at sixpence apiece, little pasties very excellent for twopence-halfpenny, and rapchicks, a delicious little bird a little larger than a partridge, could be bought for fivepence, and sometimes there was plenty of honey. Milk, if a bottle were provided, could be had for a penny-farthing a quart, and my neighbours soon saw that I did not commit the extravagance of paying three times as much for it, which was what it cost if you bought the bottle.

The English, they said, were very rich! and they were confirmed in their belief when they found how I bought milk. Hard-boiled eggs were to be had in any quantity, two and sometimes three for a penny-farthing. I am reckoning the kopeck as a farthing. These were first-class prices,

the soldiers bought much more cheaply. Enough meat to last a man a day could be bought for a penny-farthing, and good meat too—such meat nowadays I should pay at least five shillings for.

Was all this abundance because the exiles had tramped wearily across the steppes? How much hand had they had in the settling of the country? I asked myself the question many times, but nowhere found an answer. The stations were generally crowded, but the country round was as empty as it had been along the Amur.

And the train went steadily on. Very slowly though—we only went at the rate of three hundred versts a day, why, I do not know. There we stuck at platforms where there was nothing to do but walk up and down and look at the parallel rails coming out of the East on the horizon and running away into the West on the horizon again.

“We shall never arrive,” I said impatiently.

“Ah! Madame, we arrive, we arrive,” said the Hussar officer, and he spoke a little sadly. And then I remembered that for him arrival meant parting with his comely young wife and his little son. They had with them a fox-terrier whom I used to ask into my compartment to play with Buchanan, and they called him “Sport.”

“An English name,” they said smilingly. If ever I have a fox-terrier I shall call him “Sport,” in kindly remembrance of the owners of the little friend I made on that long, long journey across the Old World. And the Hussar officer’s wife, I put it on record, liked fresh air as much as I did myself. As I walked up and down the train, even though it was warm summer weather, I always knew our two carriages because in spite of the dust we had our windows open. The rest of the passengers shut theirs most carefully. The second class were packed, and the third class were simply on top

of one another—I should not think they could have inserted another baby—and the reek that came from the open doors and that hung about the people that came out of them was disgusting.

I used to ask my Cossack friend to tea sometimes—I could always buy cakes by the wayside—and he was the only person I ever met who took salt with his tea. He assured me the Mongolians always did so, but I must say though I have tried tea in many ways I don't like that custom.

In Kobdo, ten thousand feet among the mountains in the west of Mongolia, was a great lama, and the Cossack was full of this man's prophecy.

Three emperors, said the lama, would fight. One would be overwhelmed and utterly destroyed, the other would lose immense sums of money, and the third would have great glory.

"The Tsar, Madame," said my friend, "the Tsar, of course, is the third."

I wonder what part he took in the revolution. He was a Balt, a man from the Baltic Provinces, heart and soul with the Poles, and he did not even call himself a Russian. Well, the Tsar has been overwhelmed, but which is the one who is to have great glory? After all, the present is no very great time for kings and emperors. I am certainly not taking any stock in them as a whole. Perhaps that lama meant the President of the United States!

We went round Lake Baikal, and the Holy Sea, that I had seen before one hard plain of glittering ice, lay glittering now, beautiful still in the August sunshine. There were white sails on it and a steamer or two, and men were feverishly working at alterations on the railway. The Angara ran swiftly, a mighty river, and we steamed along it into the Irkutsk station, which is by no means Irkutsk,

for the town is—Russian fashion—four miles away on the other side of the river.

At Irkutsk it seemed to me we began to be faintly Western again. And the exiles who had come so far I suppose abandoned hope here. All that they loved—all their life—lay behind. I should have found it hard to turn back and go east myself now. What must that facing east have been for them ?

They turned us out of the train, and Buchanan and I were ruefully surveying our possessions, heaped upon the platform, wondering how on earth we were to get them taken to the cloakroom and how we should get them out again supposing they were taken, when the captain of the *Askold* appeared with a porter.

“Would Madame permit,” he asked, not as if he were conferring a favour, “that her luggage be put with mine in the cloakroom ?”

Madame could have hugged him. Already the dusk was falling, the soft, warm dusk, and the people were hastening to the town or to the refreshment-rooms. There would be no train that night, said my kind friend, some time in the morning perhaps, but certainly not that night. I sighed. Again I was adrift, and it was not a comfortable feeling.

If Madame desired to dine—— Madame did desire to dine. Then if Madame permits—— Of course Madame permitted. She was most grateful. And we dined together at the same table outside the station restaurant—I like that fashion of dining outside—under the brilliant glare of the electric light. He arranged everything for me, even to getting some supper for Buchanan. And I forgot the exiles who had haunted me, forgot this was Siberia. Here in the restaurant, save for the Tartar waiters, it might almost have been France.

“Perhaps,” said my companion courteously as we were

having coffee, "Madame would care to come to my hotel. I could interpret for her and here no one speaks anything but Russian."

Again I could have hugged him. I intimated my dressing-bag was in the cloakroom, but he smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"For one night!"

He himself had nothing, so there and then we got into one of the usual decrepit landaus and went to the town, to Irkutsk on the Angara, in the heart of Siberia. If in my girlish days when I studied the atlas of the world so carefully I could have known that one day I should be driving into Irkutsk, that map would have been glorified for ever and a day; but I could never have realised, never, that it would be set in a summer land, warm as my own country, and that I should feel it a great step on towards the civilisation of the West.

It was night, and here and there clustering electric lights glittered like diamonds, making darker the spaces in between. In the morning I saw that the capital of Eastern Siberia, like all the other towns of that country, is a regular frontier town. There were the same wide streets grass-grown at the edges, great houses and small houses side by side, and empty spaces where as yet there were no houses. We went to the Central Hotel.

"I do not go to an expensive hotel," my companion told me, "this is a moderate one."

But if it were moderate it certainly was a very large and nice hotel. Russian hotels do not as a rule provide food, the restaurant is generally separate, but we had already dined. That naval officer made all arrangements for me. He even explained to an astonished chamber-maid with her hair done in two long plaits that I must have all the windows

open and when I tried for a bath did his best for me. But again, he explained, Russians as a rule go to a bath-house, and there was only one bathroom in this hotel; it had been engaged for two hours by a gentleman, and he thought, seeing I should have to start early in the morning, it might be rather late for me to have a bath then, but if I liked in the morning it would be at my service.

If anyone had told me in the old days that going to Irkutsk I should be deeply interested in a bath!

I engaged that bath for an hour in the morning as that seemed to be the correct thing to do. Then I went to bed and heartily envied Buchanan, who did not have to bother about toilet arrangements.

In the morning early there was a knock at the door and when I said "Come in," half expecting tea, there was my naval officer in full uniform smilingly declaring my bath was ready, he had paid the bill, and I could pay him back when we were on board the train. The chamber-maid, with her hair still done in two plaits—I rather fancy she had slept in them—conducted me to the bathroom, and I pass over the difficulty of doing without brush and comb and tooth-brush. But I washed the dust out of my hair, and when I was as tidy as I could manage I joined the captain of the *Askold* and we drove back through the town to the railway station.

The station was a surging mass of people all talking at once, and all, I suppose, objurgating the railway management, but we two had breakfast together in the pleasant sunlight. We had fresh rolls and butter and coffee and cream and honey—I ask no better breakfast when these things are good—and meanwhile people, officials, came and went, discussing evidently some important matter with my friend. He departed for a moment, and then the others that I had known came up, my Cossack friend and the Hussar officer, and

told me that the outgoing train was a military train, it would be impossible for a woman, a civilian and a foreigner at that, to go on it. I said the captain of the *Askold* had assured me I could, and they shook their heads and then said hopefully, well, he was a very great officer, the captain of a ship, and I realised that no lesser authority could possibly have managed this thing for me. And even he was doubtful, for when he came back and resumed his interrupted breakfast he said :

“The train is full. The military authorities will not allow you on board.”

That really did seem to me tragedy at the moment. I forgot the sorrowful people who would gladly enough have stayed their journey at Irkutsk. But their faces were set East. I forgot that after all a day or two out of a life would not matter very much, or rather I think I hated to part from these kindly friends I had made on the train. I suppose I looked my disappointment.

“Wait. Wait. It is not yet finished,” said my friend kindly. “They give me two compartments”—I felt then he was indeed “a very great officer,” for the people were packed in that train, tier upon tier, like herrings in a barrel—“and I cannot sleep in four bunks. It is ridiculous.”

That may have been, but it was kindness itself of him to establish a stranger in one of those compartments. It was most comfortable, and Buchanan and I being established, and my luggage having come safely to hand, I proceeded to make the most of the brush and comb that had come once more into my possession, and I felt that the world was a very good place indeed as we sped across the green plain in the sunny morning. I could hardly believe that this goodly land was the one to which I had always been accustomed to think men went as to a living death.

And then I forgot other folks' troubles in my own, for

envious eyes were cast upon the spare bunk in my compartment. No one would have dreamt of interfering had the sailor insisted upon having all four for himself, but since he had parted with the rights of one compartment to a foreign woman, it was evident that other people, crowded out, began to think of their own comfort. Various people interviewed me. I am afraid I understood thoroughly what they wanted, but I did not understand Russian, and I made the most of that disability. Also all my friends who spoke French kept out of the way, so I suppose they did not wish to aid and abet in upsetting my comfort. At last a most extraordinary individual with a handkerchief tied round his neck in lieu of a collar and a little tourist cap on the back of his head was brought, and he informed me in French that there was a doctor in the hospital section of the train who had not been in bed for a week, they could not turn the soldiers out, they must have rest, would I allow him to sleep in my compartment?

"Madame," he said, and the officials standing round emphasised the remark, if it needed emphasis, "it is war time. The train is for the soldiers."

Certainly I was here on sufferance. They had a right to turn me out if they liked. So the doctor came and turned in in the top bunk, and his long-drawn snores took away from my sense of privacy.

I don't think he liked it very much, for presently he was succeeded by a train official, very drunk, though I am bound to say he was the only drunken man I saw on all that long train journey from Stretensk to Petrograd. It was a little unlucky we were at such close quarters. Everyone, too, was very apologetic.

He was a good fellow. It was an unfortunate accident and he would be very much ashamed.

I suppose he was, for the next day he too disappeared and his place was taken by a professor from one of the Siberian universities who was seeking radium. He was a nice old gentleman who had learned English but had never had the chance of hearing it spoken. Where he went in the daytime I do not know, probably to a friend's compartment, and Buchanan and I had the place to ourselves. We could and did invite the Cossack officer and the Hussar officer and his belongings and the naval man to tea, and we had great games with the little fox-terrier "Sport" from next door, but when night fell the professor turned up and notified me he was about to go to bed. Then he retired and I went to bed first on the lower seat. He knocked, came in and climbed up to his bunk, and we discoursed on the affairs of the world, I correcting his curious pronunciation. He really was a man of the world; he was the sort of man I had expected to meet in Siberia, only I had never imagined him as free and sharing a railway compartment with me. I should have expected to find him toiling across the plains with the chains that bound his ankles hitched to his belt for convenience of carrying. But he looked and he spoke as any other cultivated old gentleman might have spoken, and looking back I see that his views of the war, given in the end of August, 1914, were quite the soundest I have ever listened to.

"The Allies will win," he used to say, "yes, they will win." And he shook his head. "But it will be a long war, and the place will be drenched in blood first. Two years, three years, I think four years." I wonder if he foresaw the chaos that would fall upon Russia.

These views were very different from those held by the other men.

"Madame," the Cossack would say, laughing, "do you know a good hotel in Berlin?"

I looked up surprised. "Because," he went on, "I engage a room there. We go to Berlin!"

"Peace dictated at Berlin," said they all again and again, "peace dictated at Berlin." This was during the first onward rush of the Russians. Then there came a setback, two towns were taken and the Germans demanded an indemnity of twenty thousand pounds apiece.

"Very well," said the Cossack grimly, and the Hussar nodded his head. "They have set the tune. Now we know what to ask."

But the professor looked grave. "Many towns will fall," said he.

Another thing that struck me was the friendly relations of the officers with those under them. As the only representative of their Western Ally on the train, I was something of a curiosity, and soldiers and non-commissioned officers liked to make excuse to look at me. I only wished I had been a little smarter and better-looking for the sake of my country, for I had had no new clothes since the end of 1912. However, I had to make the best of it, and the men came to me on the platforms or to my compartment without fear. If by chance they knew a little French they spoke to me, helped out by their officers if their vocabulary ran short.

"Madame, Madame," said an old non-commissioned officer, "would you be so good as to tell me how to pronounce the English 'zee'? I teach myself French, now I teach myself English."

Well, they had all been good to me and I had no means of repaying their kindness save vicariously, so I took him in hand and with the aid of a booklet published by the Wagons Lit Train du Luxe describing the journey across Siberia we wrestled with the difficulties of the English "th."

It was a long long journey. We crept across the great steppes, we lingered by stations, sometimes there were lakes, sometimes great rivers, but always the great plains. Far as the eye could see rolled the extent of green under the clear blue sky ; often we saw herds of cattle and mobs of horses, and again and again companies of soldiers, and yet so vast is the country the sensation left upon the stranger is of emptiness, of a rich and fertile land crying out for inhabitants. I looked at it from the train with eager eyes, but I began to understand how there had grown up in my mind the picture of this lovely land as a dark and terrible place. To the prisoners who came here this plain, whether it were green and smiling, or whether it were deep in white snow, could only have been the barrier that cut them off from home and hope, from all that made life dear. How could they take up their broken lives here, they who for the most part were dwellers in the cities ?

Here was a regiment of soldiers ; it was nothing, nothing, set in the vast plain. The buttercups and daisies and purple vetches were trampled down for a great space where men had been exercising or camping ; but it was nothing. There were wide stretches of country where the cattle were peacefully feeding and where the flowers turned up smiling faces to the blue sky for miles and miles, making me forget that this had been the land of shadowed lives in the past and that away in the West men were fighting for their very existence, locked in a death-grip such as the world has never before seen.

It was well there was something to look out upon, for that train was horrid. I realised something of the horrors of the post-houses in which the prisoners had been locked at night. We could get good food at every station, but in the train we were too close on the ground and the reek of

us went up to heaven. I felt as if the atmosphere of the train desecrated the fresh, clear air of the great plain over which we passed, as if we must breed disease. The journey seemed interminable, and what I should do when it ended I did not know, for opinion was fairly unanimous: they were sure I could not get to England!

With many apologies the captain of the *Askold* permitted himself to ask how I was off for money. I was a total stranger, met on a train, and a foreigner! I told him I had a little over forty pounds and if that were not enough I had thought to be able to send to London for more.

He shook his head.

"I doubt if even letters can get through."

And I sighed that then I did not know what I should do, for I had no friends in Petrograd.

"Pardon, Madame," said he remonstrantly, and he gave me the address of his wife and daughters. He told me to go and see them; he assured me that everybody in Russia now wanted to learn English, that I would have no difficulty in getting pupils and so do myself very comfortably "till we make a passage to England again."

Just before we reached Cheliabynsk he came and told me that he had heard there was a west-bound express with one place vacant, a ship awaited him and speed was very necessary, therefore he was leaving this train. Then at one of the greater stopping-places he bowed low over my hand, bade me farewell, made a dash and caught the express. I have never either seen or heard of him since, but he remains in my mind as one of the very kindly men I have met on my way through the world.

At Cheliabynsk we spent the livelong day, for there the main part of the train went on to Moscow with the soldiers, while we who wanted to go to Petrograd caught a train in the

evening. I was glad to find that the Hussar officer and the Cossack were both bound for Petrograd. And here we came in touch once more with the West. There was a bookstall, and though I could not buy an English paper I could and did buy an English book, one of John Galsworthy's in the Tauchnitz edition. It was a great delight to come in contact once more with something I could read. There was a big refreshment-room here with all manner of delectable things to eat, only we had passed beyond the sturgeon, and caviare was no longer to be had save at a price that was prohibitive to a woman who had had as much as she could eat and who anyhow was saving her pennies in case of contingencies.

But one thing I did have, and that was a bath. In fact the whole train bathed. Near the station was a long row of bath-houses, but each one I visited—and they all seemed unpleasant places—was crowded with soldiers. After a third attempt to get taken in my Cossack friend met me and was shocked at the idea of my going to such a place; if I would trust him he would take me to a proper place after *déjeuner*.

Naturally I trusted him gladly, and we got into one of the usual broken-down landaus and drove away to the other side of the town to a row of quite superior bath-houses. My friend declared he knew the place well, he had been stationed here in "the last revolution," as if revolutions came as regularly as the seasons.

It was a gorgeous bath-house. That young man bought me soap; he bought me some sort of loofah for scrubbing; he escorted me to three large rooms which I engaged for a couple of hours and, much to the surprise of the people, having had the windows opened, he left me, assuring me that the carriage should return for me in two hours. There

was plenty of hot water, plenty of cold, and any amount of towels, and both Buchanan and I washed the grime of the journey from us and then rested on the sofa in the retiring-room. I read John Galsworthy and punctually to the moment I descended to the street, clean and refreshed, and there our carriage awaited us.

We bought water-melons on our way back to the train, for the streets were heaped up with the great dark green melons with the pink flesh that I had not seen since I left Australia. Autumn was on the land and here were water-melons proof thereof.

Ever as we went west the cornfields increased. Most of the wheat was cut and standing in golden-brown stooks waiting to be garnered by old men and boys and sturdy country women and those who were left of her young men, for Russia had by no means called out her last lines in 1914. There were still great patches of forest, primeval forest, of dense fir, and I remembered that here must be the haunts of the wolves and the bear with which I had always associated Russia. More, though why I know not, my mind flew back to the times of the nomad hordes who, coming out of Central Asia, imposed their rule upon the fair-haired Aryan race that had settled upon the northern plain of Europe. Those forests for me spelled Romance; they took away from the feeling of commonplaceness that the breaking down of my preconceived ideas of Siberia had engendered. Almost anything might happen in a land that held such forests, and such rivers. Not that I was allowed to see much of the rivers now. Someone always came in and drew down the blinds in my compartment—I had one to myself since leaving Cheliabynsk—and told me I must not go out on the platform whenever we crossed a bridge. They were evidently taking precautions against spying though they were too polite to

say so. There were big towns with stations packed to overflowing. At Perm we met some German prisoners of war, and there were soldiers, soldiers everywhere, and at last one day in the first week in September we steamed into Petrograd.

CHAPTER XVI

THE WAYS OF THE FINNS

It was evening and we had arrived at Petrograd. For many years I had wanted to see the northern capital. I had thought of it as a town planned by a genius, slowly growing amid surrounding swamps, and in my childhood I had pictured that genius as steadily working as a carpenter—in a white paper cap—having always in his mind's eye the town that was to grow on the Baltic Sea, the seaport that should give his country free access to the civilisation of the West. He was a great hero of mine because of his efficiency; after all I see no reason why I should dethrone him now that I realise he had the faults of his time and his position.

But in life I find things always come differently to what one pictures them. The little necessities of life will crop up and must be attended to first and foremost. The first thought that came to me was that I had to part with the friends I had made on the journey. Right away from the borders of China the Cossack officer and I had travelled together; I had met the Hussar officer and his wife soon after I had joined the train, and we seemed to have come out of one world into another together. It made a bond, and I for one was sorry to part. They were going to their own friends or to a Russian hotel, and the general consensus of opinion was that I would be more comfortable in a hotel where there were English or at least French people.

“Go to the Grand Hotel, Madame,” suggested the Hussar officer's wife, she who spoke perfect French.

So Buchanan and I loaded our belongings on to a droshky that looked smart after the ones I had been accustomed to in Asia, bade farewell to our friends "till after the war"—the Cossack was coming to England then "to buy a dog"—and drove to the Grand Hotel.

The Grand Hotel spoke perfect English, looked at me and—declined to take me because I had a little dog. I was very much astonished, but clearly I couldn't abandon Buchanan, so I went on to the Hotel d'Angleterre, which also declined. I went from hotel to hotel and they all said the same thing, they could not think of taking in anyone accompanied by a dog. It was growing dark—it was dark, and after a fortnight on the train I was weary to death. How could I think of the glories of the Russian capital when I was wondering where I could find a resting-place? I couldn't turn Buchanan adrift in the streets, I couldn't camp in the streets myself, and the hotel porters who could speak English had no suggestions to make as to where I could bestow my little friend in safety. Six hotels we went to and everyone was firm and polite, they could not take a dog. At last a hotel porter had a great idea, the Hotel Astoria would take dogs.

"Why on earth didn't someone tell me so before?" I said, and promptly went to the Hotel Astoria. It was rather like going to the Hotel Ritz, and though I should like to stay at the Hotel Ritz I would not recommend it to anyone who was fearing an unlimited stay in the country, who had only forty pounds to her credit and was not at all sure she could get any more. Still the Hotel Astoria took little dogs, actually welcomed them, and charged four shillings a day for their keep. I forgot Peter the Great and the building of the capital of Russia, revelling in the comforts of a delightful room all mirrors, of a bathroom attached and a dinner

that it was worth coming half across the world to meet. My spirits rose and I began to be quite sure that all difficulties would pass away, I should be able to get back to England and there would be no need for that desperate economy. It was delightful to go to bed in a still bed between clean white sheets, to listen to the rain upon the window and to know that for this night at least all was well. I had seen no English papers ; I knew nothing about the war, and it is a fact one's own comfort is very apt to colour one's views of life. Buchanan agreed with me this was a very pleasant world—as a rule I do find the world pleasant—it was impossible anything could go wrong in it.

And the next day I received a snub—a snub from my own people.

I went to the British Consulate full of confidence. Every foreigner I had met all across the world had been so pleased to see me, had been so courteous and kind, had never counted the cost when I wanted help, so that I don't know what I didn't expect from my own countrymen. I looked forward very much to meeting them. And the young gentleman in office snubbed me properly. He wasn't wanting any truck with foolish women who crossed continents ; he didn't care one scrap whether I had come from Saghalien or just walked down the Nevsky Prospekt ; I was a nuisance anyway, his manner gave me to understand, since I disturbed his peace and quiet, and the sooner I took myself out of the country the better he would be pleased. He just condescended to explain where I could get a ticket straight through to Newcastle-on-Tyne ; people were doing it every day ; he didn't know anything about the war, and his manner gave me to understand that it wasn't his business to supply travellers with news. I walked out of that office with all the jauntiness taken out of me. Possibly, I have thought

since, he was depressed at the news from France, perhaps someone was jeering him because he had not joined up, or else he had wanted to join up and was not allowed. It was unlucky that my first Englishman after so long should be such a churlish specimen. I felt that unless my necessity was dire indeed I should not apply to the British Consulate for help in an emergency. I did not recover till I went to the company who sold through tickets, across Finland, across Sweden and Norway, across the North Sea to Newcastle-on-Tyne. There I bought a ticket for fifteen pounds which was to carry me the whole way. It was a Swedish company, I think, and the office was packed with people, Poles, Letts, Lithuanians and Russians, who were naturalised Americans and who wanted to go home. Everybody took the deepest interest in Buchanan, so much interest that the man in charge asked me if I was going to take him. I said "Of course," and he shook his head.

"You will never get him through Sweden. They are most strict."

Poor Buchanan! Despair seized me. Having been to the British Consulate, I knew it was no use seeking advice there. I suppose I was too tired or I should have remembered that Americans are always kind and helpful and gone there or even dared the British Embassy. But these ideas occurred to me too late.

You may travel the world over and the places you visit will often remain in your mind as pleasant or otherwise not because of any of their own attributes, but because of the emotions you have suffered in them. Here was I in St Petrograd, and instead of exploring streets and canals and cathedrals and palaces my whole thoughts were occupied with the fate of my little dog. I "had given my heart to a dog to tear" and I was suffering in consequence. All the

while I was in Petrograd—and I stayed there three days looking for a way out—my thoughts were given to James Buchanan. I discussed the matter with the authorities in the hotel who could speak English, and finally Buchanan and I made a peregrination to the Swedish Consulate. And though the Swedish Consulate was a deal more civil and more interested in me and my doings than the English, in the matter of a dog, even a nice little dog like Buchanan, they were firm—through Sweden he could not go.

I read in the paper the other day that the world might be divided into men and women and people-who-hate-dogs, and these last will wonder what I was making such a fuss about, but the men and women will understand. My dear little companion and friend had made the lonely places pleasant for me and I could not get him out of the country save by turning round and going back across Europe, Asia and America!

I went back to the place where I had bought my ticket. They also were sympathetic. Everyone in the office was interested in the tribulations of the cheerful little black and white dog who sat on the counter and wagged a friendly tail. I had many offers to take care of him for me, and the consensus of opinion was that he might be smuggled! And many tales were told me of dogs taken across the borders in overcoats and muffs, or drugged in baskets.

That last appealed to me. Buchanan was just too big to carry hidden easily, but he might be drugged and covered up in a basket. I went back to the Astoria and sent for a vet. Also I bought a highly ornamental basket. The porter thought I was cruel. He thought I might leave the dog with him till after the war, but he translated the vet's opinion for me, and the vet gave me some sulphonal. He assured me the little dog would be all right, and I tried to

put worrying thoughts away from me and to see Petrograd, the capital of the Tsars.

But I had seen too much. There comes a moment, however keen you are on seeing the world, when you want to see no new thing, when you want only to close your eyes and rest, and I had arrived at that moment. The wide and busy streets intersected with canals, the broad expanse of the Neva, the cathedral and the Winter Palace were nothing to me; even the wrecked German Embassy did not stir me.

I was glad then when the fourth morning found me on the Finland station. The Finland station was crowded and the Finland train, with only second and third class carriages and bound for Raumo, was crowded also, and it appeared it did not know its way very well as the line had only just been opened to meet the traffic west diverted from Germany. A fortnight before no one had ever heard of Raumo.

And now for me the whole outlook was changed. This was no military train, packed as it was, but a train of men, women and children struggling to get out of the country, the flotsam and jetsam that come to the surface at the beginning of a war. And I heard again for the first time since I left Tientsin, worlds away, English spoken that was not addressed to me. To be sure it was English with an accent, the very peculiar accent that belongs to Russians, Lithuanians, Poles and Letts Americanised, and with it mingled the nasal tones of a young musician from Central Russia who spoke the language of his adopted land with a most exaggerated accent and the leisurely, cultivated tones of Oxford.

I had come from the East to the West !

The carriage was open from end to end and they would not allow Buchanan to enter it. He, poor little man, in the gorgeous basket that he objected to strongly, was banished

to the luggage-van, and because the carriage was hot, and also because I felt he would be lonely separated from me, I went there and kept him company.

And in that van I met another Russian naval officer and deepened my obligations to the Russian navy. He sat down beside me on one of the boxes, a tall, broad-shouldered, fair man who looked like a Viking with his moustache shaved off. I found to my joy he spoke English, and I confided to him my difficulties with regard to breakfast. I was so old a traveller by now I had learned the wisdom of considering carefully the commissariat. He was going to the forts on the Finnish border of which he was in command, but before he left the train we would arrive at a refreshment-room, and he undertook to arrange matters for me. And so he did.

Petrograd does not get up early, at least the Hotel Astoria did not, and the most I could manage before I left was a cup of coffee, but I made up for it at that first refreshment-room. The naval officer took entire charge and, revelling in his importance, I not only had a very good breakfast but made the most of my chances and, filling up my basket with a view to future comforts, bought good things so that I might be able to exchange civilities with my fellow-passengers on the way to Raumo. I had eggs and sausages and new bread and scones and a plentiful supply of fruit, to say nothing of sugar and lemons and cream and meat for Buchanan—the naval man looking on smiling—and when I had really done myself well I turned to him and demanded what I ought to pay.

“Nothing, Madame. In Russia when a gentleman takes a lady for refreshment he pays!”

Imagine my horror! And I had stocked my basket so lavishly!

My protests were useless. I was escorted back to our luggage-van and my thoughts led gently from the coffee and eggs I had consumed and the sausages and bread I had stowed away in my basket to the state of the war as it struck the Russian naval mind.

Had I heard about the sea fight in the Mediterranean? Not heard about the little *Gloucester* attacking the *Goeben*, the little *Gloucester* that the big German battleship could have eaten! A dwarf and a giant! Madame! Madame! It was a sea fight that will go down through the ages! Russia was ringing with it!

“Do you know anyone in the English navy?”

I said I had two brothers in the senior service, a little later and I might have said three.

“Then tell them,” said he earnestly, “we Russian sailors are proud to be Allies of a nation that breeds such men as manned the *Gloucester*!”

The Finnish border was soon reached and he left us, and the day went on and discipline I suppose relaxed, for I brought Buchanan into the carriage and made friends with the people who surrounded me. And then once again did I bless the foresight of the Polish Jewess in Kharbin who had impressed upon me the necessity for two kettles. They were a godsend in that carriage. We commandeered glasses, we got hot water at wayside stations and I made tea for all within reach, and a cup of tea to a thirsty traveller, especially if that traveller be a woman, is certainly a road to that traveller's good graces.

Finland is curiously different from Russia. They used to believe in the old sailing-ship days that every Finn was a magician. Whether they are magicians or not, they have a beautiful country, though its beauty is as different from that of the Amur as the Thames is from the Murray

in far-away Australia. Gone were the wide spaces of the earth and the primitive peoples. We wandered through cultivated lands, we passed lake and river and woods, crossed a wonderful salmon river, skirted Finland's inland sea : here and there was a castle dominating the farmhouses and little towns, the trees were turning, just touched gently by Autumn's golden fingers, and I remembered I had watched the tender green of the spring awakening on the other side of the world, more, I had been travelling ever since. It made me feel weary—wearied. And yet it was good to note the difference in these lands that I had journeyed over. The air here was clear, clear as it had been in China ; it had that curious charm that is over scenery viewed through a looking-glass, a charm I can express in no other words. Unlike the great rivers of Russia, the little rivers brawled over the stones, companionable little streams that made you feel you might own them, on their banks spend a pleasant afternoon, returning to a cosy fire and a cheery home when the dusk was falling.

And this evening, our first day out, we, the little company in my carriage, fell into trouble.

We spoke among us many tongues, English, French, German, Polish, Russian, Lettish, and one whose tongue was polyglot thought in Yiddish and came from the streets, the "mean streets" of London, but not one amongst us spoke Finnish, the language of the magicians, or could even understand one word of it. This was unfortunate, for the Finns either spoke no language but their own or had a grudge against us and declined to understand us. That didn't prevent them from turning us out that night in a railway station in the heart of Finland and leaving us to discover for ourselves that every hotel in the little town was full to overflowing ! Once more I was faced with it—a night in

a railway station. But my predicament was not so bad shared with others who spoke my language. There was the Oxford man and the musician with a twang, there was the wife of an American lawyer with her little boy and the wife of an American doctor with her little girls—they all spoke English of sorts, used it habitually—and there were four Austrian girls making their way back to some place in Hungary. Of course, technically, they were our enemies, while the Americans were neutral, but we all went in together. The Russian-American musician had been in Leipsic and was most disgustingly full of the mighty strength of Germany.

The refreshment-rooms were shut, the whole place was in darkness, but it was a mild night, with a gorgeous September moon sailing out into the clear sky, and personally I should not have minded spreading my rugs and sleeping outside. I should have liked it, in fact, but the tales of the insecurity of Siberia still lingered in my consciousness, and when the Oxford man said that one of the porters would put us up in his house I gladly went along with all the others and, better still, took along my bundles of rugs and cushions.

The places that I have slept in ! That porter had a quaint little wooden house set in a garden and the whole place might have been lifted bodily out of Hans Andersen. We had the freedom of the kitchen, a very clean kitchen, and we made tea there and ate what we had brought in our baskets. The Austrian girls had a room to themselves, I lent my rugs to the young men and they made shift with them in the entrance porch, and the best sitting-room was turned over to the women and children and me. Two very small beds were put up very close together and into them got the two women and three children, and I was accommodated with a remarkably Lilliputian sofa. I am not a big

woman, but it would not hold me, and as for Buchanan, he looked at me in disgust, said a bed was a proper place for a dog and promptly jumped on it. But it was full to overflowing of women and children sleeping the sleep of the utterly weary and he as promptly jumped off again and the next moment was sitting up in front of my sofa with his little front paws hanging down. He was a disgusted dog. He always begged when he wanted me to give him something, and now he begged to show me he was really in need of a bed. There were great uncurtained windows on two sides of that room, there were flowers and ferns in pots growing in it, and the full moon streamed in and showed me everything: the crowded, rather gimcrack furniture, the bucket that contained water for us to wash in in the morning, the bed full of sleeping women and children and the little black and white dog sitting up in protest against what he considered the discomforts of the situation. What I found hard to bear were the hermetically sealed windows—the women had been afraid of draughts for the children—so as soon as that night wore through and daylight came stealing through the windows I dressed quietly and, stepping across the sleeping young men at the door, went outside with Buchanan to explore Finland.

Our porter evidently ran some sort of tea gardens, for there were large swings set up, swings that would hold four and six people at once, and we tried them, much to Buchanan's discomfiture. We went for a walk up the street, a country town street of little wooden houses set in little gardens, and over all lay a Sabbath calm. It was Sunday, and the people slept, and the autumn sunlight made the whole place glorious. There is such rest and peace about the autumn: everything has been accomplished and now is the fullness of time. I never know which season I like best, each has its

own beauty, but I shall always think of Finland as a land of little things, charming little things bathed in the autumn sunlight.

When the whole party were awake we found some difficulty in getting something to eat. The porter could not supply us, and at the station, where they were vigorously sweeping—the Finns are very clean—they utterly declined to open the first-class refreshment-rooms. We could only get something to eat in the third-class. There was a great feeling of camaraderie and good-fellowship among us all, and here I remember the lawyer's wife insisted upon us all having breakfast at her expense, for according to her she owed us all something. It was she who added to our party the Yiddish woman, a fat, square little person hung round with innumerable bundles, carrying as she did a month's provisions, enough to last her across to America, for she was a very strict Jew and could eat nothing but *kosher* killed meat and *kosher* bread, whatever that may be. I know it made her a care, for a month's provisions make something of a parcel, and when bedding and a certain amount of clothing has to be carried as well, and no porters are available, the resulting baggage is apt to be a nuisance. All along the line this fat little person was liable to come into view, toiling under the weight of her many bundles. She would be found jammed in a doorway; she would subside exhausted in the middle of a railway platform—the majority of her bundles would be retrieved as they fell downstairs—or she blocked the little gateway through which passengers were admitted one by one, and the resulting bad language in all the tongues of Northern Europe probably caused the Recording Angel a good deal of unnecessary trouble. But the Oxford man and the musician were always ready to help her, and she must have blessed the day the American lawyer's wife

added her to a party which had such kindly, helpful young men among its members.

I found presently that the Oxford man and I were the moneyed members of the party, the only ones who were paying our way; the others, far richer people than I, I daresay, had been caught in the whirlpool of the war and were being passed on from one American consul to another, unable to get money from their own country. Apparently this was rather an unpleasant process, meaning a certain scarcity of cash, as an American consul naturally cannot afford to spend lavishly on his distressed subjects. It was the irony of fate that some of them were evidently not accustomed to looking too carefully after the pennies.

It took us two days to cross Finland, and towards the end of the journey, after we had got out to have tea at a wayside station that blossomed out into ham and tea and bread and honey, we made friends with a certain Finn whose father had been a Scotsman. At last we were able to communicate with the people of the country! Also I'm afraid we told him in no measured terms that we did not think much of his compatriots. That was rather a shame, for he was exceedingly kind. He was going to England, he told us, to buy sheepskins for the Russian army, and he took great interest in my trouble about Buchanan. He examined him carefully, came to the conclusion he was a perfectly healthy little dog and suggested I should lend him to him till we reached Sweden, as he was perfectly well known to the authorities, and Finnish dogs would be allowed to enter Sweden, while a dog that had come from Russia would certainly be barred. I loved that man for his kindly interest and I handed over Buchanan in his basket without a qualm.

We were really quite a goodly company when in the dusk of the evening we steamed into Raumo. The station

seemed deserted, but we didn't worry much about that, as our new Finnish friend suggested the best thing to do was to go straight down to the steamer, the *Uleaborg*, a Finnish ship, and have our dinner and spend the night there. Even if she did not go that night, and he did not think she would, we could rest and sleep comfortably. We all agreed, and as the train went on down to the wharf we appointed him our delegate to go on board and see what arrangements he could make for us. The minute the train stopped, off he went, and Buchanan went with him. I was getting easier in my mind about Buchanan now, the thought of drugging him had been spoiling my pleasure in the scenery. And then we waited.

It began to rain, and through the mist which hid the moonlight to-night we could see the loom of the ships; they were all white and the lights from the cabin ports showed dim through the misty rain. The wharf was littered with goods, barrels and bales, and as there was more than one steamer, and apparently no one to guide us, or the Scots Finn had not returned, we tackled the Russian *gens d'arme* who seemed to be in charge of the wharf and who was leaning up against the train.

"Can you speak Finnish?"

"Ah! now you have my secret first shot," said he, with a smile. He, their guardian, was no more equal to communicating with these people than we were. And then, to our dismay, before our messenger could return, the train which considered not a parcel of refugees put on steam and started back to Raumo!

A dozen voices were raised in frantic protest, but we might as well have spared our breath, the train naturally paid no attention to us, but went back at full speed to the town proper. It was a comfort when it stopped, for, for all we

knew, it might have gone straight back to Petrograd itself. And Buchanan, shut up in a basket, was left behind, I knew not where! They dumped us on that station, bag and baggage, in the rain. We were worse off here than we were at the wharf, for there the steamer and comfort at least loomed in the distance. Here was only a bare and empty station, half-a-dozen men who looked at us as if we were so many wild beasts on show, and a telephone to the wharf which we were allowed to use as long as we pleased, but as far as I could gather the only result was a flow of bad language in many tongues. We might be of many nations, but one and all were we agreed in our dislike of the Finns and all things Finnish. If I remember rightly, in the Middle Ages, most people feared and disliked magicians.

We managed to get our baggage into the hall of the station, which was dimly lighted by electric lights, and in anticipation of our coming they had filled up the station water-carafes. But that was all the provision they had made. If there was a refreshment-room it had been locked up long ago, and as far as we could make out, now our interpreter had gone, there were no hotels or boarding-houses. Our Scots Finn had said it was impossible to stay in Raumo. We looked at one another in a dismay in which there was, after all, something comic. This that had befallen us was the sort of aggravating thing a mischievous magician would cause to happen. We were tired and hungry and bad-tempered, and I for one was anxious about my little dog and I began to seek, with cash in my hand, somebody who would find me Buchanan.

How I made my wants known I don't now realise, but money does wonders, and presently there came in a man bearing his basket and a rapturous little dog was let out into the room. Where he had been I have not the faintest idea,

and I could not ask, only I gathered that the man who brought him professed himself perfectly willing to go on fetching little dogs all night at the same rate, and the musician remarked in his high nasal twang that he supposed it was no good expecting any more sympathy from Mrs Gaunt, she was content now she had her little dog. As a matter of fact, now that my mind was at ease, I was equal to giving my attention to other people's woes.

We tackled the men round us.

Where was our messenger ?

No one knew.

Where could we get something to eat ?

Blank stare. They were not accustomed to foreigners yet at Raumo. The station had only just been opened. The musician took out his violin and its wailing tones went echoing and re-echoing through the hall. The audience looked as if they thought we had suddenly gone mad, and one man came forward and by signs told us we must leave the station. That was all very well, we were not enamoured of the station, but the port we judged to be at least four miles off, and no one was prepared to start down an unknown road in the dark and pouring rain. There was a long consultation, and we hoped it meant food, but it didn't. Out of a wilderness of words we at last arrived at the interesting fact that if we cared to subscribe five marks one of these gentlemen was prepared to conduct us to the police station. There appeared to be no wild desire on the part of any of us to go to the police station, the violin let out a screech of scornful derision, and one of the officials promptly turned off the electric lights and left us in darkness !

There were many of us, and vexations shared are amusing. We laughed, how we laughed, and the violin went wailing up and down the octaves. No wonder the Finns looked at

us askance. Even the darkness did not turn us out, for we had nowhere else to go, and finally a man who spoke English turned up, the agent for the Swedish steamer. He had thought there would be no passengers and had gone to bed, to be roused up, I presume by the stationmaster, as the only person likely to be capable of dealing with these troublesome people who were disturbing the peace of this Finnish village.

We flew at him—there were about a dozen of us—and showed our tickets for the Finnish steamer, and he smiled in a superior manner and said we should be captured by Germans.

We didn't believe much in the Germans, for we had many of us come through a country which certainly believed itself invulnerable. Then a woman travelling with her two daughters, Americans of the Americans, though their mother spoke English with a most extraordinary accent, proclaimed aloud that if there was a Swedish steamer she was going by it as she was afraid of "dose Yarmans." She and her daughters would give up their tickets and go by the Swedish steamer. Protest was useless. If we liked to break up the party we could. She was not going by the *Uleaborg*. Besides, where were we to sleep that night? The Finnish steamer was three or four miles away down at the wharf and we were here along with the Swedish agent.

The Swedish agent seized the opening thus given. There were no hotels; there were no boarding-houses; no, it was not possible to get anything to eat at that hour of the night. Something to drink? Well, in surprised tones, there was surely plenty of water in the station—there was—and he would arrange for a train for us to sleep in. The train at ten o'clock next morning would take us down to the steamer.

We retired to that train. Only one of the carriages

was lighted, and that by general consent we gave up to the lady whose fear of the Germans had settled our affairs for us, and she in return asked us to share what provisions we had left. We pooled our stores—I don't think I had anything left, but the others shared with me—and we dined, not unsatisfactorily, off sardines, black bread, sausages and apples. The only person left out of the universal friendliness was the Yiddish lady. Out of her plenty she did not offer to share.

“She cannot,” said the musician. “She is saving for the voyage to America. You see, she can eat none of the ship-board food.” He too came of the same strict order of Jew, and his grandparents, with whom he had been staying in Little Russia, had provided him with any amount of sausage made of *kosher* meat, but when he was away from his own people he was evidently anything but strict and ate what pleased him. He shared with the rest of us. Possibly he was right about the Yiddish woman, and I suppose it did not really do us any harm to go short till next morning, but it looked very greedy, and I still wonder at the nerve of a woman who could sit down and eat sausage and bread and all manner of such-like things while within a stone's-throw of her people who had helped her in every way they could were cutting up apples and pears into quarters and audibly wishing they had a little more bread. The Oxford man and musician had always helped her, but she could not find it in her heart to spare them one crumb. I admire her nerve. In America I doubt not she will acquire wealth.

After supper Buchanan and I retired to a dark carriage, wrapped ourselves in my eiderdown and slept till with break of day two capable but plain Finnish damsels came in to clean the train. I think the sailors' ideas must have been wrong: every Finn cannot be a magician else they would not

allow all their women to be so plain. I arose and dressed and prepared to go out and see if Raumo could produce coffee and rolls, but as I was starting the violinist in the next compartment protested.

"I wouldn't. Guess you haven't got the hang of these Finnish trains. It might take it into its head to go on. Can't you wait till we reach the steamer."

I gave the matter my consideration, and while I was considering the train did take it into its head to go on four hours before its appointed time. On it went, and at last in the fresh northern dewy morning, with the sun just newly risen, sending his long low rays streaming across the dancing waters of the bay, we steamed up to the wharf, and there lay the white ships that were bound for Sweden, the other side of the Baltic.

CHAPTER XVII

CAPTURED BY GERMANS

BUT we couldn't get on the steamer at once. For some reason or other there were Customs delays and everything we possessed had to be examined before we were allowed to leave the country, but—and we hailed them with delight—under the goods sheds were set out little tables where we could buy coffee and rolls and butter and eggs. It was autumn now, and for all the sunshine here in such high latitudes there was a nip in the air and the hot coffee was welcome. We met, too, our friend of the night before, the Scots Finn, but the glamour had departed from him and we paid no attention to his suggestion that the *Goathied*, the Swedish steamer, was very much smaller than the *Uleaborg* and that there was a wind getting up and we would all be deadly sick. We said we preferred being sick to being captured by the Germans. And he laughed at us. There was no need to fear the Germans in the Baltic so far north.

It was midday before we were allowed on board the little white ship, but still she lingered. I was weary, weary, even the waiting seemed a weariness so anxious was I to end my long journeying and get home. And then suddenly I felt very near it, for my ears were greeted by the good broad Doric of Scotland, and there came trooping on board five and fifty men, part of the crews of four English ships that had been caught by the tide of war and laid up at Petrograd and Kronstadt. An opportunity had been found and they were going back by way of Sweden, leaving their ships

behind till after the war. We did not think the war *could* last very long on board that steamer.

The Scotsmen had evidently been expected, for on the deck in the bows of the little steamer—she was only about three hundred tons—were laid long tables spread with ample supplies of boiled sausages, suet pudding and potatoes, and very appetising it looked, though in all my wanderings I had never met boiled sausages before. Down to the feast sat the sailor-men, and our Yiddish friend voiced aloud my feelings.

“Anglisky,” said she unexpectedly, “nice Anglisky boys. Guten appetite, nice Anglisky boys!”

They were very cheery, poor boys, and though they were not accustomed to her sort in Leith, they received her remarks with appreciative grins.

As we started the captain came down upon me.

“Who does that dog belong to?” he asked angrily. Everyone on board spoke English. And before I could answer—I wasn’t particularly anxious to answer—he added: “He can’t be landed in Sweden.”

My heart sank. What would they do to my poor little dog? I was determined they shouldn’t harm him unless they harmed me first, and if he had to go back to Russia—well, I would go too; but the thought of going back made me very miserable, and I made solemn vows to myself that if I by some miracle got through safely, never, never again would I travel with a dog.

And while I was thinking about it there came along a junior officer, mate, purser, he might have been the cook for all I know, and he said: “If you have bought this dog in Finland, or even on board the steamer, he can land.”

It was light in darkness, and I do not mind stating that where my dog is concerned I have absolutely no morals, if it

is to save him from pain. He had been my close companion for over a year and I knew he was perfectly healthy.

"I will give you a good price for him," said I. "He is a pretty little dog."

"Wait," he said, "wait. By and by I see."

Just as we got out of the bay the captain announced that he was not going to Stockholm at all, but to Gefle, farther north. Why, he did not know. Such were his orders. In ordinary times to find yourself being landed at Liverpool, say, when you had booked for London might be upsetting, but in war time it is all in the day's work, and sailors and crowded passengers only laughed.

"Let's awa'," said the sailors. "Let's awa'."

The air was clear and clean, clean as if every speck of dust had been washed away by the rain of the preceding night; the little islands at the mouth of the bay stood out green and fresh in the blue sea, but the head wind broke it up into little waves, and the ship was empty of cargo and tossed about like a cork. The blue sea and snow-white clouds, the sunlight on the dancing waves mattered not to us; all we wanted, those of us who were not in favour of drowning at once and so ending our misery, was to land in Sweden. Buchanan sat up looking at me reproachfully, then he too subsided and was violently sick, and I watched the passengers go one by one below to hide their misery, even those who had vowed they never were sea-sick. I stayed on deck because I felt I was happier there in the fresh air, and so I watched the sunset. It was a gorgeous sunset; the clouds piled themselves one upon the other and the red sun stained them deepest crimson. It was so striking that I forgot my sea-sick qualms.

And then suddenly I became aware there were more ships upon the sea than ours, one in particular, a black, low-lying

craft, was steaming all round us, sending out defiant hoots. There were three other ships farther off, and I went to the rail to look over the darkening sea.

Between us and the sunset was the low-lying craft, so close I could see the gaiters of a man in uniform who stood on a platform a little higher than his fellows ; the little decks were crowded with men and a long gun was pointed at us. It was all black, clean-cut, silhouetted against the crimson sunset.

We were slowed down, barely moving, the waves slopped against our sides, and the passengers came scrambling up.

"Germans! Yarmans!" they cried, and from the torpedo boat came a voice through a megaphone.

"What are you doing with all those fine young men on board?" it asked in excellent English, the language of the sea.

The black torpedo boat was lying up against us.

Sea-sickness was forgotten, and the violinist came to me.

"They are going to take the young men," he said, and he was sorry and yet pleased, because all the time he had been full of the might of the Germans.

I thought of the Oxford man in the very prime of his manhood.

"Have you told him?"

"Guess I didn't dare," said he.

"Well, I think you'd better, or I'll go myself. They are going to search the ship and he won't like being taken unawares."

So he went down, and presently they came up together. The Oxford man had been very sea-sick and he thought all the row was caused by the ship having struck a mine, and he felt so ill that if things were to end that way he was

accepting it calmly, but being captured by Germans was a different matter. He was the only Englishman in the first class, and when we heard they were coming for the young men we felt sure he would have to go.

Leaning over the rail of the *Goathied*, we could look down upon the black decks of the torpedo boat, blacker than ever now in the dusk of the evening, for the sun sank and the darkness was coming quickly. A rope ladder was flung over and up came a couple of German officers. They spoke perfect English, and they talked English all the time. They went below, demanded the passenger list and studied it carefully.

"We must take those Englishmen," said the leader, and then he went through every cabin to see that none was concealed.

The captain made remonstrance, as much remonstrance as an unarmed man can make with three cruisers looking on and a torpedo boat close alongside.

"It is war," said the German curtly, and in the dusk he ranged the sailor-men along the decks, all fifty-five of them, and picked out those between the ages of nineteen and forty. Indeed one luckless lad of seventeen was taken, but he was a strapping fellow and they said if he was not twenty-one he looked it.

It was tragic. Of course there must have been treachery at work or how should the German squadron have known that the Englishmen were crossing at this very hour? But a few moments before they had been counting on getting home and now they were bound for a German prison! In the gathering darkness they stood on the decks, and the short, choppy sea beat the iron torpedo boat against the ship's side, and the captain in the light from a lantern hung against the little house looked the picture of despair.

"She cannot stand it! She cannot stand it much longer!"

Crash! Crash! Crash!

"She cannot stand it! She was never built for it! And she is old now!"

But the German paid no attention. The possible destruction of a passenger ship was as nothing weighed in the balance with the acquirement of six and thirty fighting men.

They were so quiet. They handed letters and small bundles and sometimes some of their pay to their comrades or to the passengers looking on and they dropped down that ladder. No one but a sailor could have gone down, for the ships heaved up and down, and sometimes they were bumping and sometimes there was a wide belt of heaving dark water between them, bridged only by that frail ladder. One by one they went, landing on the hostile deck, and were greeted with what were manifestly jeers at their misfortune. The getting down was difficult and more than once a bundle was dropped into the sea and there went up a sigh that was like a wail, for the passengers looking on thought the man was gone, and I do not think there would have been any hope for him between the ships.

Darker and darker it grew. On the *Goathied* there were the lighted decks, but below on the torpedo boat the men were dim figures, German and English undiscernible in the gloom. On the horizon loomed the sombre bulk of the cruisers, each with a bright light aloft, and all around was the heaving sea, the white tops of the choppy waves showing sinister against the darker hollows.

"Anglisky boys! Anglisky boys!" wailed the Yiddish woman, and her voice cut into the waiting silence. It was their dirge, the dirge for the long, long months of imprisonment that lay before them. And we were hoping for a short

war! I could hear the Oxford man drawing a long breath occasionally, steeling himself against the moment when his turn would come.

It never came. Why, I do not know. Perhaps they did not realise his nationality, for being a Scotsman he had entered himself as "British" on the passenger list, and "British" was not such a well-known word as the sons of Britain gathering from all corners of the earth to fight the common foe have made it to-day.

"Puir chappies! Puir chappies! A'm losin' guid comrades," sighed an elderly man leaning over the side and shouting a farewell to "Andra'."

I murmured something about "after the war," but he cut me short sternly. The general opinion was that they would be put to stoke German warships and as the British were sure to beat them they would go down and be ingloriously lost. The thought must have been a bitter one to the men on that torpedo boat. And they took it like heroes.

The last man was gone, and as the torpedo boat drew away a sort of moan went up from the bereft passenger ship and we went on our way, the captain relieved that we were free before a hole had been knocked in our side.

He was so thankful that no worse thing had befallen him that he became quite communicative.

"They are gone to take the *Uleaborg*," he said, "and they will blow her up and before to-morrow morning Raumo will be in flames!"

In those days Sweden had great faith in the might of Germany. I hope that faith is getting a little shaken at last. Still that captain declared his intention of warning all the ships he could. There were two Finnish ships of which he knew that he said were coming out of Stockholm that night and he was going to look for them and warn them.

And so the night was alive with brilliant electric light signals and wild hootings from the steam siren, and he found them at last, all honour to him for a kindly sailor-man, and the Finnish ships were warned and went back to Sweden.

But no matter how sorry one is for the sufferings of others, the feeling does not in any way tend to lessen one's own private woes. Rather are they deepened because sympathy and help is not so easily come by when men's thoughts are occupied by more—to them more—important matters. And so I could not go to sleep because of my anxiety about my little dog. Only for the moment did the taking of the men and my pity for them drive the thought of his predicament from my mind.

We were nearing Sweden, every moment was bringing us closer, and as yet I had made no arrangements for his safety. He lay curled up on the seat, hiding his little snub nose and his little white paws with his bushy tail, for the autumn night was chilly, and I lay fearing a prison for him too, when he would think his mistress whom he had trusted had failed him. All the crew were so excited over the kidnapping of the men that my meditated nefarious transaction was thrust into the background. It was hopeless to think that any one of them would give ear to the woes of a little dog, so at last, very reluctantly, I gave him, much to his surprise, a sulphonal tablet. I dozed a little and when by my watch it was four o'clock Buchanan was as lively as a cricket. Sulphonal did not seem to have affected him in any way. I gave him another, and he said it was extremely nasty and he was surprised at my conduct, but otherwise it made no difference to him.

In the grey of the early morning we drew up to the wharf and were told to get all our belongings on to the lower deck for the Customs to examine them, and Buchanan was as

cheerful and as wide awake as if he had not swallowed two sulphonal tablets. With a sinking heart I gave him another, put him in his basket and, carrying it down to the appointed place, threw a rug over it and piled my two suit-cases on top of it. How thankful I was there was such a noisy crowd, going over and over again in many tongues the events of the night. They wrangled too about their luggage and about their places, and above all their din I could hear poor little James Buchanan whining and whimpering and asking why his mistress was treating him so badly.

Then came the Customs officer and my heart stood still. He poked an investigatory hand into my suit-case and asked me—I understood him quite well—to show him what was underneath. I could hear Buchanan if he could not, and I pretended that I thought he wanted to know what was at the bottom of my suit-case and I turned over the things again and again. He grew impatient, but luckily so did all the people round, and as a woman dragged him away by force to look at her things so that she could get them ashore I noticed with immense relief that the sailors were beginning to take the things to the wharf. Luckily I had taken care the night before to get some Swedish money—I was taking no chances—and a little palm oil made that sailor prompt to attend to my wants. Blessings on the confusion that reigned around! Two minutes later on Swedish soil I was piling my gear on a little hand-cart with a lot of luggage belonging to the people with whom I had come across Finland and it was bound to the railway station.

“You have left your umbrella,” cried the violinist.

“I don’t care,” said I. I had lost my only remaining hat for that matter, goodness knows what had become of it, but I was not going to put myself within range of those

Customs men again. What did I care about appearances ! I had passed the very worst milestone on my journey when I got James Buchanan into Sweden ; I had awakened from the nightmare that had haunted me ever since I had taken my ticket in Petrograd, and I breathed freely.

At the railway station we left our luggage, but I got Buchanan's basket, and we all went across the road to a restaurant just waking to business, for we badly wanted breakfast. I loved those passengers. I shall always think of them with gratitude. They were all so kind and sympathetic and the restaurant folks, who were full of the seizing of the Englishmen on a Swedish ship—so are joys and sorrows mingled—must have thought we were a little mad when we all stood round and, before ordering breakfast, opened a basket and let out a pretty little black and white dog.

And then I'm sorry to say we laughed, even I laughed, laughed with relief, though I there and then took a vow never again to drug a dog, for poor little James Buchanan was drunk. He wobbled as he walked, and he could not make up his mind to lie down like a sensible dog and sleep if off ; he was conversational and silly and had to be restrained. Poor little James Buchanan ! But he was a Swedish dog, and I ate my breakfast with appetite, and we all speculated as to what had become of the Scots Finn who had failed me.

Gefle reminded me of Hans Andersen even more than Finland had done. It had neat streets and neat houses and neat trees and neat and fair-haired women, and Gefle was seething with excitement because the *Goathied* had been stopped. It was early days then, and Sweden had not become accustomed to the filibustering ways of the German, so every poster had the tale writ large upon it, in every place they were talking about it, and we, the passengers who walked about the streets, were the observed of all observers.

I was nearing the end of my long journey, very near now, and it did not seem to me to matter much what I did. We were all—the new friends I had made on the way from Petrograd—pretty untidy and travel-stained, and if I wore a lace veil on my hair, the violinist had a huge rent in his shoe, and, having no money to buy more, he went into a shoe-shop and had it mended. I, with Buchanan a little recovered, sat beside him while it was done.

And in the afternoon we went by train through the neat and tidy country, Selma Lagerlof's country, to Stockholm. I felt as if I were resting, rested, because I was anxious no longer about Buchanan, who slumbered peacefully on my knee; and if anybody thinks I am making an absurd fuss about a little dog, let them remember he had been my faithful companion and friend in far corners of the earth when there were none but alien faces around me, and had stood many a time between me and utter loneliness and depression.

We discussed these sturdy Swedes. The Chicago woman's daughter, with the pertness and aptness of the American flapper, summed them up quickly.

"The men are handsome," she said, looking round, "but the women—well, the women lack something—I call them tame."

And I knew she had hit them off to a "T." After that I never looked at a neat and tidy Swedish woman with her hair, that was fair without that touch of red that makes for gold—gives life—coiled at the back of her head and her mild eyes looking out placidly on the world around her without feeling that I too call her tame.

Stockholm for the most of us was the parting of the ways. The American consul took charge of the people who had

come across Finland with us and the Oxford man and I alone went to the Continental Hotel, which, I believe, is the best hotel in that city. We had an evening meal together in a room that reminded me very much of the sort of places we used to call coffee palaces in Melbourne when I was a girl, and I met here again for the first time for many a long day tea served in cups with milk and cream. It was excellent, and I felt I was indeed nearing home. Things were getting commonplace and the adventure was going out of life. But I was tired and I didn't want adventure any more. There comes a time when we have a surfeit of it.

I remember my sister once writing from her home somewhere in the Malay jungle that her husband was away and it was awkward because every night a leopard came and took up his position under the house, and though she believed he was only after the fowls she didn't like it because of the children. If ever she complains that she hasn't had enough adventure in her life I remind her of that and she says that is not the sort of adventure she has craved. That is always the way. The adventure is not always in the form we want. I seemed to have had plenty, but I was weary. I wanted to sit in a comfortable English garden in the autumn sunshine and forget that such things as trains and ships—perish the thought of a mule litter—existed. I counted the hours. It couldn't be long now. We came down into the hall to find that I had been entered on the board containing the names of the hotel guests as the Oxford man's wife. Poor young man! It was a little rough on him, for I hadn't even a hat, and I felt I looked dilapidated.

I was too. That night in the sleeper crossing to Christiania the woman who had the bottom berth spoke excellent English. She was going to some baths and she gave some advice.

"You are very ill, Madame," said she, "very ill."

I said no, I was only a little tired.

"I think," she went on, "you are very ill, and if you are wise when you get to Christiania you will go to the Hotel Victoria and go to bed."

I was horrified. Because I felt I must go to England as quickly as possible, and I said so.

"The train does not go to Bergen till night," said she. "Stay in bed all day." And then as we crossed the border a Customs officer came into the carriage. Now I could easily have hidden Buchanan, but I thought as a Swedish dog all his troubles were over, and he sat up there looking pertly at the uniformed man and saying "What are you doing here?"

"Have you got a certificate of health for that dog?" asked the man sternly.

I said "No," remembering how very carefully I had kept him out of the way of anybody likely to be interested in his health.

"Then," said he, "you must telegraph to the police at Christiania. They will meet you and take him to a veterinary surgeon."

"And after?" I asked, trembling, my Swedish friend translating.

"If his health is good they give him back to you. You take a room at a hotel and if his health is good he will be allowed to skip about the streets."

I felt pretty sure he would be allowed to skip about the streets and I took a room at the Victoria, the Oxford man kindly seeing us through—they put us down as Mr and Mrs Gaunt here—and James Buchanan, who had been taken possession of by the police at the station, came back to me, accompanied by a Norwegian policeman who demanded five

shillings and gave me a certificate that he was a perfectly healthy little dog.

I want to go back to Norway when I am not tired and fed up with travelling, for Christiania struck me as a dear little home-like town that one could love ; and the railway journey across the Dovrefield and even the breakfast baskets that came in in the early morning were things to be remembered. I saw snow up in those mountains, whether the first snow of the coming winter or snow left over from the winter before, I do not know, but the views were lovely, and I asked myself why I went wandering in far-away places when there were places like this so close at home and so easily reached. So near home. We were so near home. I could think of nothing else. I told Buchanan about it and he licked my hand sympathetically and told me always to remember that wherever I was was good enough for him. And then we arrived at Bergen, a little wooden city set at the head of a fiord among the hills, and we went on board the *Haakon VII.*, bound for Newcastle-on-Tyne.

And then the most memorable thing happened, the most memorable thing in what for me was a wondrous journey. All across the Old World we had come, almost from the very farthest corner of the Old World, a wonderful journey not to be lightly undertaken nor soon forgotten. And yet as I went on board that ship I felt what a very little thing it was. I have been feeling it ever since. A Norwegian who spoke good English was there, going back to London, and, talking to another man, he mentioned in a casual manner something about the English contingent that had landed on the Continent.

It startled me. Not in my lifetime, nor in the lifetime of my father, indeed I think my grandfathers must have been very little boys when the last English troops landed in France.

“English troops !” I cried in astonishment.

The Norwegian turned to me, smiling.

“Yes,” he said. “But of course they are only evidence of good will. Their use is negligible !”

And I agreed. I actually agreed. Britain’s rôle, it seemed to me, was on the sea !

And in four years I have seen Britain grow into a mighty military power. I have seen the men of my own people come crowding across the ocean to help the Motherland ; I have seen my sister’s young son pleased to be a soldier in that army, just one of the proud and humble crowd that go to uphold Britain’s might. And all this has grown since I stood there at the head of the Norwegian fiord with the western sun sparkling on the little wavelets and heard a friendly foreigner talk about the little army that was “negligible.”

I was tired. I envied those who could work and exert themselves, but I could do nothing. If the future of the nation had depended on me I could have done nothing. I was coming back to strenuous times and I longed for rest. I wanted a house of my own ; I wanted a seat in the garden ; I wanted to see the flowers grow, to listen to the birds singing in the trees. All that our men are fighting for to keep sacred and safe, I longed for.

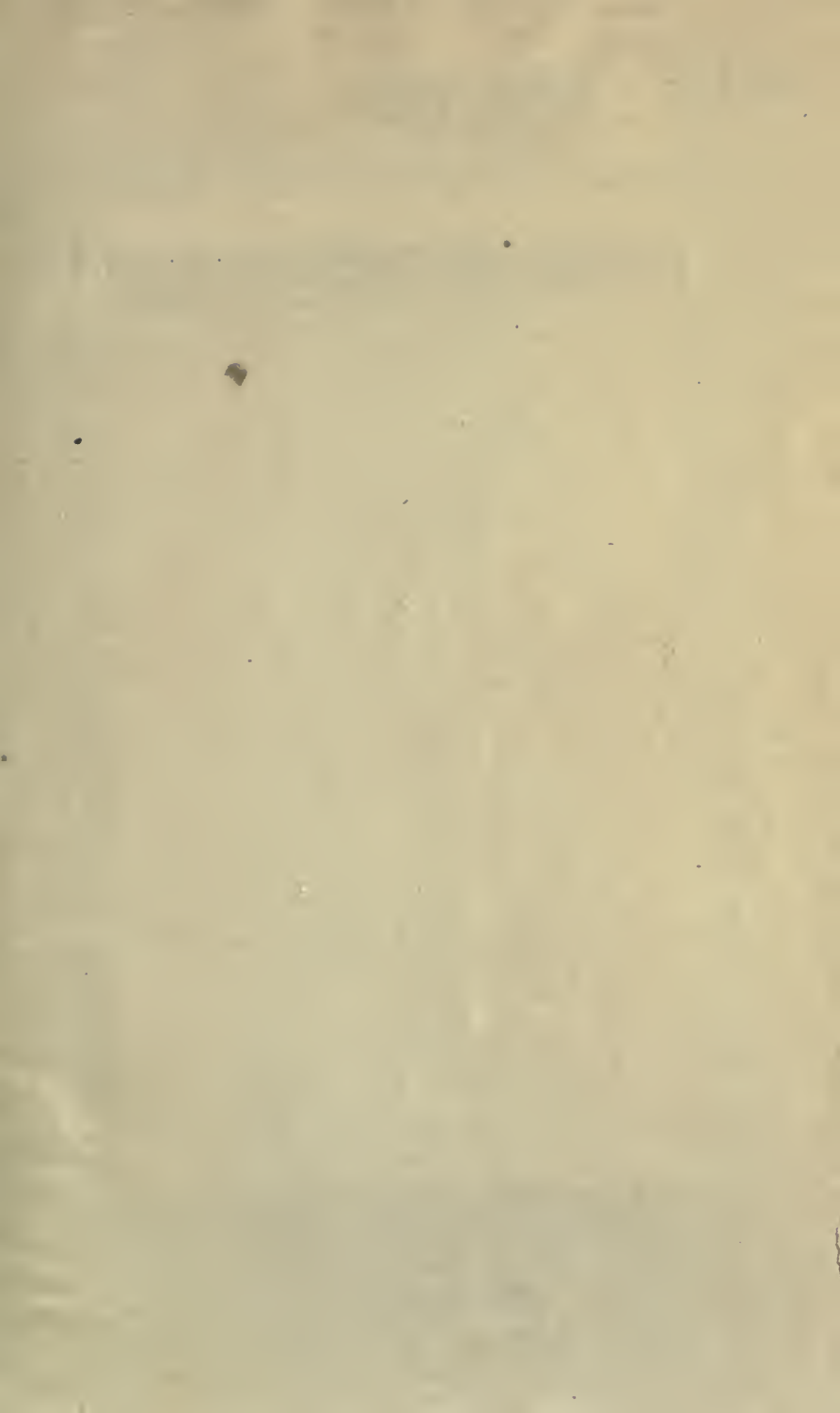
And I have had it, thanks to those fighting men who have sacrificed themselves for me, I have had it. It is good to sit in the garden where the faithful little friend I shall never forget has his last resting-place ; it is good to see the roses grow, to listen to the lark and the cuckoo and the thrush ; but there is something in our race that cannot keep still for long, the something, I suppose, that sent my grandfather to the sea, my father to Australia, and scattered his sons and daughters all over the world. I had a letter from a soldier

brother the other day. The war holds him, of course, but nevertheless he wrote, quoting :

“Salt with desire of travel
Are my lips ; and the wind’s wild singing
Lifts my heart to the ocean
And the sight of the great ships swinging.”

And my heart echoed : “ And I too ! And I too ! ”





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